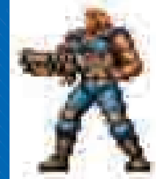
OLD!

BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO CLASSIC GAMES

retro GAMER™

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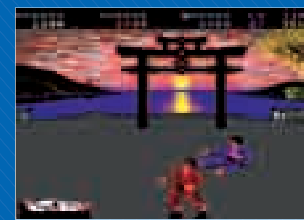


THE NEW LOOK RETRO GAMER BACK, BIGGER & BETTER

HIYAAHHH!

THE MAKING OF…

ARCHER MACLEAN REVEALS HOW INTERNATIONAL KARATE AND IK+ KO'D THE OPPOSITION



WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



BITE THE BULLET

DISCOVER THE EVOLUTION OF NAMCO'S ROLLING THUNDER

TO BE THIS GOOD TAKES… SEGA

Anniversary 2006 15th SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

BARGAIN HUNT

CHECK OUT OUR COMPLETE LISTING OF VINTAGE HARDWARE

NICK PELLING

THE CREATOR OF FRAK! REVEALS HIS FAVOURITE GAMES

DS ROUND-UP

THE BEST RETRO GAMES FOR YOUR DS LITE



RETRO GAMER UNCOVERS THE WHOLE SORRY STORY BEHIND ATARI'S JAGUAR

EVERY ISSUE IN RETRO GAMER

RAIDEN
YOUR INDISPENSABLE GUIDE TO RAIDEN. MISS IT AT YOUR PERIL

SONIC TEAM
YUJI NAKA RECOUNTS THE HISTORY OF THE FAMED DEVELOPER

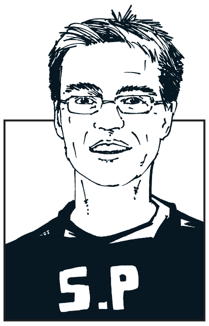
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THE RETROBATES

FIRST GAME YOU EVER PLAYED



SIMON PHILLIPS

I'll be buggered if I can remember the actual game but it was definitely on an Atari 2600. In fact, now that I think about it, it was… nope… it's gone again.

Expertise:
Juggling babies and work

Currently playing:
Daddy

Favourite game of all time:
Head Over Heels



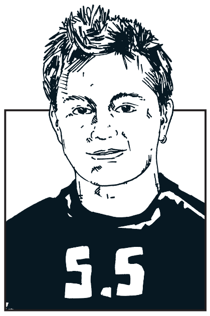
ASHLEY DAY

Paperboy on the Commodore 64! It was another ten years before I sadly realised that the real thing didn't involve a challenging assault course at the end of each day.

Expertise: Identifying pop songs in obscure MSX games

Currently playing:
Boktai 2

Favourite game of all time:
Shining Force III



SPANNER

I can't even remember what I drank for breakfast yesterday. It must have been for the G7000 – like *Gunfighter* or something. Whatever it was, it must have been good.

Expertise:
Unnecessary violence

Currently playing: *I'm OK*

Favourite game of all time: No favourites – I'm no longer capable of enjoying life (see above).



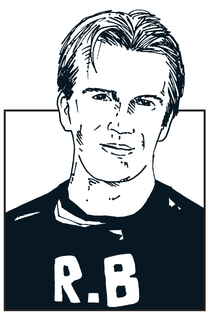
JOHN SZCZEPANIAK

Pac-Man, at the local corner shop. I was too short to play the machine properly, so my parents would get an empty milk crate for me to stand on.

Expertise: Japanese games

Currently playing:
Lunar Rescue

Favourite game of all time:
Cave Story



RICHARD BURTON

3D Monster Maze (JK Greye) for the ZX81. Blocky monochrome graphics and no sound but it was a fantastic game with oodles of atmosphere and genuinely scary moments. Great stuff.

Expertise:
Amstrad CPC and Spectrum games

Currently playing:
Highway Encounter



MIKE TOOLEY

The first game I remember owning was *Pick Axe Pete* on the Phillips Video Pac. Basically you had to navigate from the bottom to the top of the screen smashing boulders on the way. Intense and still holds up today.

Expertise: Games that few have heard of and less have played

Currently playing: *Battlefront 2*

Favourite game of all time:
Mr Do!



DARRAN JONES

The first game I ever played was Peek-A-Boo with my mum. I can't remember if I enjoyed it or not, but according to my old dear I was doing a lot of contented gurgling while we were playing.

Expertise: You're reading it

Currently playing:
New Super Mario Bros

Favourite game of all time:
Robotron: 2084



CRAIG GRANNELL

I recall playing *Space Invaders*, with the help of the cunning accessory 'dad', who held me up, as I was too short at the time to see the screen.

Expertise: Games whose controllers don't require you to have 37 fingers.

Currently playing:
Boulder Dash

Favourite game of all time:
H.E.R.O.



PAUL DRURY

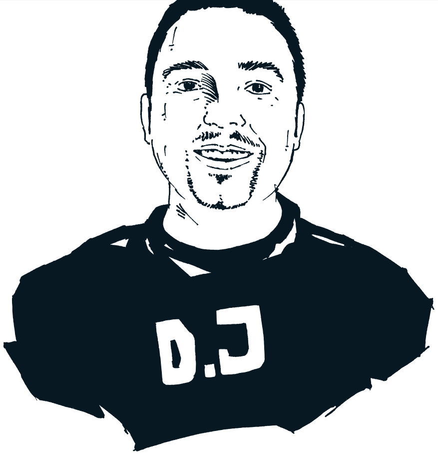
Boot Hill at Ripley Swimming Pool September 11th 1977. The beginning of the affair. My breaststroke suffered immensely.

Expertise:
Getting old programmers to confess their drug habits

Currently playing:
Twin Kingdom Valley

Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space

LOADING...



It's amazing to think that Sega's blue mascot is now 15 years old. It seems like only yesterday that the strains of Green Hill Zone first caught our ears and we realised just how quickly a hedgehog in red slippers could actually move.

Like Mario, Sonic has proven himself a versatile chap, cropping up in plenty of different genres over the years. To celebrate his 15th birthday he's got a new game coming out on PS3 and 360 later this year. It appears the Sonic express is in no danger of slowing down.

It's fitting then that Sonic not only graces our cover, but also appears in several new features this month. As well as an eight-page lookback at every *Sonic* game ever created, we've also managed to convince Sonic's creator, Yuji Naka to tell us a little bit about the history of Sonic Team and Sonic's origins.

We've not forgotten what makes Retro Gamer successful however, and you'll find plenty of classic features ranging from The Making Of *International Karate* And *IK+* to a comprehensive lowdown on Atari's ill-fated Jaguar. We've also taken reader feedback on board and created some brand new Retro Revivals for you to admire. Who says we never listen to anyone?

Enjoy the magazine.





CONTENTS

BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO CLASSIC GAMES

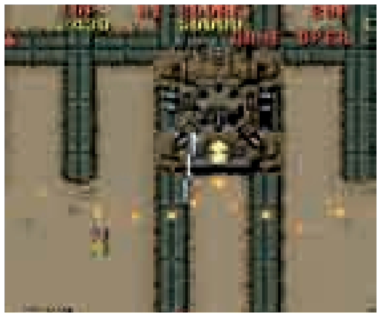


INSIDE

At-a-glance retro sections…





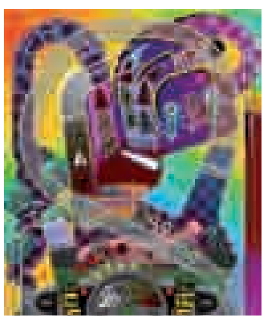


ESSENTIALS

RETROINSPECTION
ATARI JAGUAR



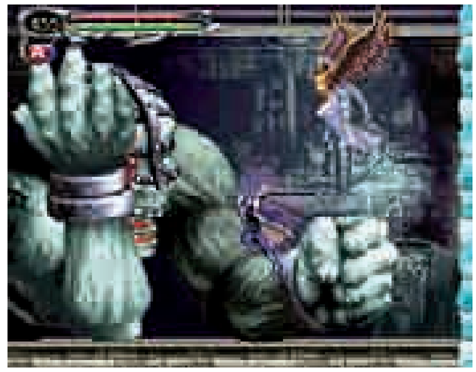
THE MAKING OF...



RETRORATED

THE GAMES LISTING...

If it's a bumper compilation or a great new remake, then Retro Rated is where you'll find it



SPOT THE SONIC!

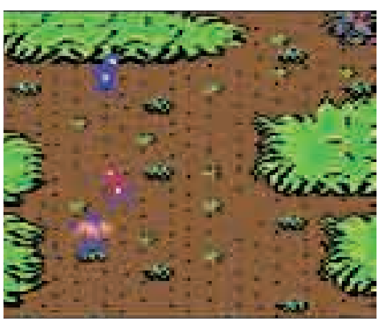
KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED AS WE'VE HIDDEN 15 SONIC SPRITES THROUGHOUT THE MAGAZINE (LIKE THE ONE ABOVE LEFT). IF YOU CAN FIND ALL 15 LET US KNOW AT THE USUAL ADDRESS AND YOU COULD WIN A GREAT SONIC RELATED PRIZE



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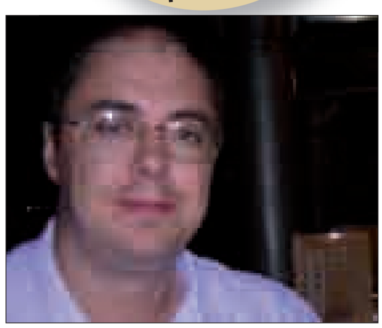
p110



OVER THE POND
THE UK AND US FACE OFF



THE EVOLUTION OF...
ROLLING THUNDER



DESERT ISLAND DISCS
NICK PELLING

RETRO SCENE



THE GUIDE

What's hot this issue…



» We're so confused. Do we play all the new Wii games that will be available at launch, or just download all of Nintendo's past hits? Sod it, we'll do both



VIRTUALLY HERE

WILL MICROSOFT'S DOWNLOAD SERVICE WII OVER THE COMPETITION?

While the rumoured official MAME software failed to appear at E3 for Xbox Live Arcade, Microsoft was still able to announce an impressive range of incoming arcade games that would be appearing on the online service over the next few months.

The most exciting news was that Konami and Sega both had games to show off for the excellent online service. Sadly, the only title Sega revealed was a new version of *Sonic The Hedgehog*, which is all fine and dandy, but we really wanted to hear about *OutRun*, *Space Harrier*, *Shinobi*, *Golden Axe* and *After Burner*. Oh well.

Luckily Konami's line-up was far more interesting, and while no firm release dates were given, many of them are worth waiting for. *Track & Field* (more commonly known as *Hyper Sports*) was the biggest announcement, and while no details about Xbox Live exclusive features were announced – this will rule if it's multi-player – we do know that like every other revealed Konami title it will feature an enhanced hi-resolution version of the game, as well as the original arcade version. The rest of Konami's canon included *Frogger*, *Contra*, *Scramble*, *Super Contra* and *Time Pilot*m, which is a pretty strong list bound to increase in the future.

Namco was also keen to support Microsoft and revealed that it had four titles ready for release, all of which would feature online scoreboards and Xbox 360 exclusive achievements. *Pac-Man*, *Rally-X*, *Galaga* and *Dig Dug* made up Namco's somewhat predictable lineup. The only other arcade games to be revealed were Capcom's *Street Fighter II Hyper Fighting* (which still has no firm release date) and Midway's *Defender*, *Paperboy*, *Mortal Kombat 3 Gold* and *Root Beet Tapper*, which were originally announced a few months back.

Meanwhile on the Nintendo stand, we were finally able to get to grips with the Wii's Virtual Console, and while only five games were shown off, each and every one had dominated the console it had originally appeared on. Nintendo's 8-bit offering was NES hit *Super Mario Bros*, while it's 16-bit SNES title was the amazing *Super Mario World*, both of which were perfectly emulated. The plumbers last outing was *Super Mario 64*, and like the other two *Mario* games, it looked great, and most importantly, played like a dream. The remaining two games were both from third parties, namely Sega and Hudsonsoft. Sega was once again showing off *Sonic The Hedgehog* (which unlike the Xbox Live Arcade version, won't be in hi-def) while visitors to the Hudsonsoft stand were able to play PC Engine hit *Bonk's Adventure* (better known as PC KID). Hudsonsoft plans to bring at least 100 titles to the Virtual Console and if the Virtual Console receives similar support from the likes of SNK, Namco, Taito, Konami and Sega, its future could be very rosy indeed.



» *Dig Dug* would be so much better it the main character wore a clown suit and went by the name of Mr Do!

HERO OF THE MONTH



STRIDER

Every month, Retro Gamer looks back at a classic videogame hero. This month it's the turn of Retro Gamer favourite Strider Hiryu

First appearance: *Strider*

Distinguishing features: Ace purple suit

Weapon of choice: Cool laser sword

Most likely to: Get mentioned in every issue of Retro Gamer

Least likely to: Not get mentioned in every issue of Retro Gamer

Unusual fact: Darran once owned the original arcade board of *Strider* and played it religiously every night. Sadly the muppet sold it and bought the PlayStation version instead

LOADING SCREEN OF THE MONTH

NO 8:
SAMANTHA FOX STRIP POKER

When you're a teenager you'll use whatever means necessary to get a glimpse of female flesh. Never mind that her massive mammaries were spread across page 3 of the Sun; Martech's 8-bit game meant that you could enjoy her in the privacy of your own bedroom. Ahem.



JUST IN HUDSONSOFT HAS JUST REVEALED THAT BOTH R-TYPE AND NEW ADVENTURE ISLAND WILL BE JOINING BONK'S ADVENTURE AS ITS FIRST WII DOWNLOADS

MILK IT BABY

CAPCOM REVEALS THREE BRAND NEW RETRO COMPILATIONS

Never one to rest on its laurels, Capcom continues to fly the retro flag by using this year's E3 (Electronic Entertainment Expo) to announce three new compilations that will be bursting with retro goodness. *Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded* is the PSP's second Capcom compilation and features an interesting list of obscure and classic titles. *Street Fighter II* fans will no doubt be ecstatic to hear that at least one version of the cult beat-'em-up will be appearing, while the likes of *Commando* and *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* are bound to keep fans of the platform and run-'n-gun genres happy. For us though it's titles like *Knights Of The Round* and *Eco Fighters* that we're most looking forward to. *Eco Fighters* in particularly is a great little cute-'em-up and has never appeared on a console before, portable or otherwise.

Capcom's second title is a sequel to the rather excellent *Capcom Classics Collection* that was released last year. Frustratingly, details of what will be on the new compendium are being kept fiercely under wraps, but we wouldn't be surprised if a few games from *Remixed* didn't make the mix. If *Strider* isn't on it there's going to be hell to pay.

The final announcement is *Capcom Classics Mini Mix* for Nintendo's Game Boy Advance. The three games that will be included originally appeared on the NES and are perfect ports of *Bionic Commando*, *Strider* and the amazing *Mighty Final Fight*.

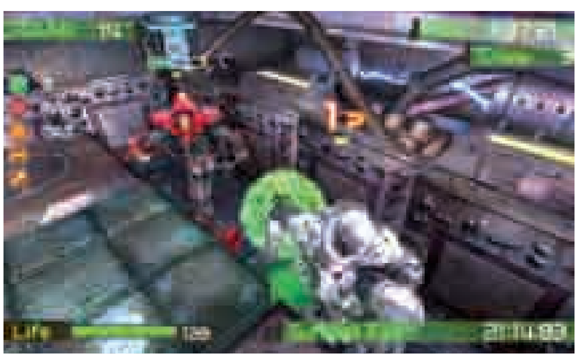




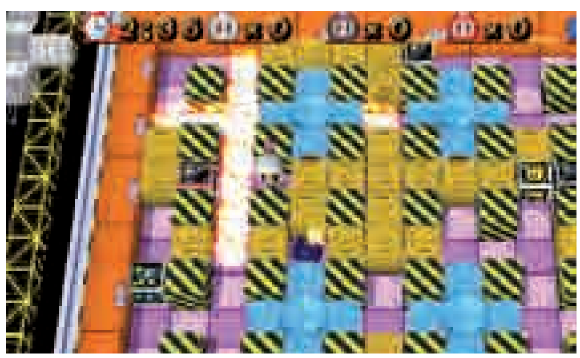
» ***Knights Of The Round*** **is bound to get beat-'em-up fans excited. Although we'd have killed for** ***Alien Vs Predator…***

DOUBLE TAKE

KONAMI REVEALS TWO NEW BOMBERMAN GAMES AND THEY COULDN'T BE MORE DIFFERENT



» **No, your eyes aren't deceiving you, this really is** ***Bomberman.*** **Kudos to Hudsonsoft for taking him in a bold new direction, but will it make the fans happy?**



» **A much more traditional look for** ***Bomberman*** **on the PSP. It may not feature too screens, but the single playing field should make it a lot easier to play**

Now this is interesting: after initially hearing that the Saturn version of *Bomberman* would be appearing on Xbox Live Arcade everything has gone quiet. Luckily Konami could well be coming to the rescue as it's just unveiled two new *Bomberman* games it will be publishing.

The innovatively-titled *Bomberman* is due to appear on the PSP at the end of the year and is already looking like it could give the fun DS version a serious run for its money. While it will feature a brand new adventure mode consisting of 100 levels and the ability to hold multiple items, it's the multi-player outing that we're most interested in. While only four players can take part, you'll all be able to play off one UMD and there will be 20 different arenas to compete in. *Bomberman Zero* on the other hand couldn't be more different and is set in a bleak underground facility and looks like a massive departure for the franchise. Due to appear on the 360 it will also feature online play, which, (fingers crossed) is the Saturn conversion that we were first told about.

GRUMPY OLD GAMER

EVERY MONTH, GRUMPY OLD GAMER INSISTS WHY OLD GAMES WERE BETTER



"I don't want to do it with a remote control," Grumpy Old Gamer thinks as he tidies his attic. "I couldn't ask for a Wii in a shop at my age, they'd put me in a home." Finally finding his peripherals box, he pulls a blue light gun from it. "Heh!" he utters. Rummaging away, he continues his adventure through the cardboard box. A light pen, a PSX steering wheel, a DC fishing rod, mech controller, a bazooka… "Why is it that EA held the *James Bond* licence and could have used these peripherals in one single game to create a realistic movie tie in, yet I have to sit there with eight directions and a fire button?"

"But you don't have the consoles anymore," his wife reminds him, "and you would never buy all those things for one game" Grumpy Old Gamer replies hurridly, "All it would need is a universal adapter so that these things worked with the latest consoles, not a uniform platform like Trip, but an adapter that prevented peripherals from being outdated with each release; it's not graphics it's experience that makes a generation successful." "Like USB?" asks his wife. "Even my wife knows more than this current generation of visionaries" he mutters. Grumpy Old Gamer puts his stuff away and grabs a box with *Astro Wars* emblazoned across it. "30 years on and we're still compatible," he thinks as he blows some dust from the game.



AMERICA FREE RETRO★

YOUR U.S. TAKE ON THE RETRO SCENE WITH RETRO GAMING RADIO'S SHANE R MONROE



ARE YOUR BALLS MADE OF STEEL OR PIXELS?

Whether you're a fan of pinball or not, it's impossible to argue that the shiny ball of steel hasn't captivated gamers all over the world. For most of us old folks, pinball started… well, with pinball. Real pinball – hard mechanical flippers, REAL rollovers and drop targets, the clickety-clack of the score resetting and of course the unmistakable sound of the clacker smacking wood indicating we had a free credit coming to us (shared by the arcade version of *Q*Bert* which had one of these devices in it's cabinet).

Classic videogaming gets a lot of press, but, sadly, pinball doesn't, probably because there really isn't a way to simulate pinball. It isn't something you can buy in a TV controller or find in some mini-game version in the latest console. Pinball's magic comes from actual world physics (not simulated ones). It comes from touches of magic like the ball occasionally smacking the glass or getting stuck in a hidey-hole. The magic of inertia – both the ball's and your own. No matter how great physics engines get, nothing can replace a real pinball machine. In their heyday, pinball machines ruled the roost. No patterns to memorize, no strategy guide… lots of skill, a little luck.

The original multi-player gaming experience, pinball has definitely grown over time. From electro-mechanical wonders like *Playboy* to brilliant LCD-era games from Williams' *High Speed* to technological wonders like *Star Wars: Episode 1* – pinball walks the technological line much like its videogame cousins. Where pinball differentiates itself, however, is that pinball aficionados know that the mark of a true pinball wonder isn't the flashy gizmos on the back glass or the holographic looking graphics of some modern machines – but rather the brilliance of the table composition. Layout is king and pinball has its share of master creators. The best pinball machines created by these wizards retain incredible value too. Some still fetch upwards of $5000 today, putting them firmly outside the grasp of all but the devoted.

Let's get one thing out of the way. I'm a pinball snob. There are a couple of things that drive me away from video pinball, but mainly scrolling. I can't stand video pinball that scrolls. Part of the magic of pinball is having a single, all-encompassing view – being able to set up those tricky shots anytime and seeing the entire board's status in a glance. Scrolling kills pinball for me. So, forgive me when I don't pay proper homage to the highly touted 21st Century '*Pinball*' series (*Pinball Dreams*, *Pinball Fantasies*, etc.) on the favoured 16-bit classic machines or the insanely popular *Epic Pinball* series on the PC. They have a huge fan base, and while I played a lot of *Pinball Dreams* on the Amiga (there's a making of on page 58) – it was hardly 'real' pinball.

Now that we have that out of the way, let's look at some video titles that do offer a decent pinball experience at home.

While barely even video pinball, a few early attempts deserve some kudos (hey, they don't scroll), which includes David's *Midnight Magic* and Bill Budge's *Pinball Construction Set* (both available on various 8-bit platforms). Both games showed how masters of programming could squeak out just enough juice to get an 'almost' pinball experience.

On consoles and PC, a couple of titles really stood out to me including Virgin's *Hyper3D Pinball* (aka *Full Tilt Pinball*) and Empire Interactive's *Pro Pinball Series* tables (such as *Time Shock!* and *The Web*). Of course, discussion of pinball on the PC wouldn't be complete without mentioning a huge community effort called Virtual Pinball – a development kit designed to help you actually





SHANE R MONROE IS THE PROUD OWNER OF POPULAR INTERNET RADIO SHOW, RETRO GAMING RADIO. HEAD ON OVER TO HTTP://WWW.RETROGAMINGRADIO.COM IF YOU WANT TO CATCH HIS LATEST SHOW

make your own pinball machines. Coupled with PinMAME (an emulator to emulate the ROM images of old pinball machines), Virtual Pinball can somewhat accurately simulate hundreds of real tables along with even more community homebrew tables from just about every theme. It is truly incredible stuff.

Great portable pinball is even harder to come by than video pinball. I would be remiss in my duties if I didn't mention a handheld electronic device from Parker Bros called *Wildfire* – an LCD driven pinball game from 1979. You can pick them up on eBay pretty cheaply. But, you don't have to troll eBay for a great pocket pinball game. If you want the very best in portable steel, check out *Metroid Prime Pinball* for the Nintendo DS. Complete with a rumble pack to help you 'feel' the ball rolling around, this is about as good as portable (heck, video pinball in general) pinball is going to get for a while. Thanks to the vertical two-screen layout, there is no scrolling and tons of playfield, missions, and a decent rule set.

Don't let pinball become a lost art form. Hit your local pub, arcade or amusement park and relive the experience that is pinball.

Keep it retro! Shane

BACK TO (OLD) SCHOOL

CLASSIC FRANCHISES ON THE WAY FROM NINTENDO

E3 gave Nintendo the opportunity to reveal some fantastic games that are due for release. The DS came out on top with some great titles; the most exciting being *Star Fox DS* and *Yoshi's Island 2*.

After the GameCube's disappointing *Starfox Assault*, *Star Fox 2* looks like a real return to form and has everything you'd expect to see in a *Star Fox game*.

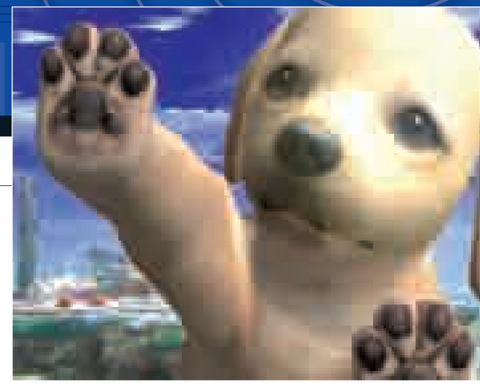
Yoshi's Island 2 could go either way. *Yoshi* is being farmed out to Artoon and while it looks the business we fear for its gameplay. The original Yoshi's Island was a masterpiece, and with any luck Miyamoto will be guiding Artoon's hand.

Other DS titles include: a new *Kirby* title, *Mario Vs Donkey Kong 2: March Of The Minis*, and *The Legend Of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass*. Rare also announced that it was working on *Diddy Kong Racing*.

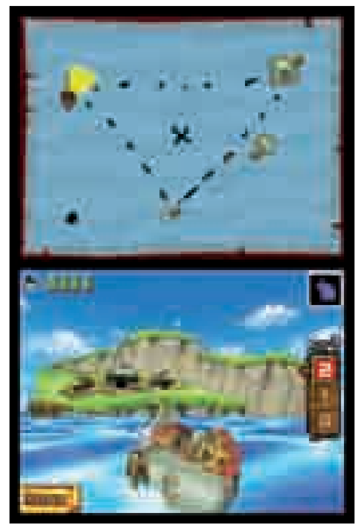
The biggest hitters for the Wii included: *Metroid Prime 3: Corruption*, *Super Smash Bros Brawl*, *The Legend Of Zelda: The Twilight Princess*, *Super Mario Galaxy* and *Duck Hunt*. *Super Smash Bros Brawl* won't be using the Wii's controller, but Nintendo did reveal several new characters including Pit (the star of *Kid Icarus*) Wario and a slinky Samus.

Metroid Prime 3 could make the same impact on FPSs that *Hunters* has managed due to its new control system, while a new build of *The Twilight Princess* demonstrated how you could use the Wii's controller to fish. *Super Mario Galaxy* looks great and is bound to go down well with anyone who enjoyed *Super Mario 64* and *Super Mario Sunshine*.

Last, was the surprise announcement that the NES classic *Duck Hunt* would be returning. With Nintendo, it's the games that really matter and Nintendo knows its target audience. We'll see you in the Wii queues in a few months.



» The *Nintendogs* will now feature in *Super Smash Bros Brawl* in order to obstruct your view. Cute



» We can't wait for *DS Zelda*, let's hope it's out this side of Christmas

TAITO'S LATEST MOBILE GAMES ENTER THE THIRD DIMENSION

THE BEST THINGS COME IN THREES

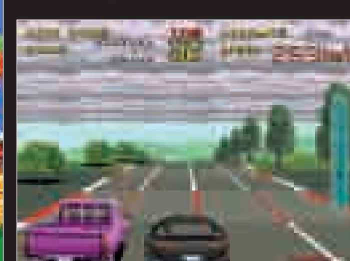
With mobile phone games moving into the realms of 3D, Taito has announced three new titles based on classic franchises: *3D Space Invaders*, *Chase HQ 3D* and *Elevator Action 3D*.

3D Space Invaders looks to be the most radical departure, as you'll now be able to switch through different camera views, with the press of a button to give you a brand new way of playing the classic series.

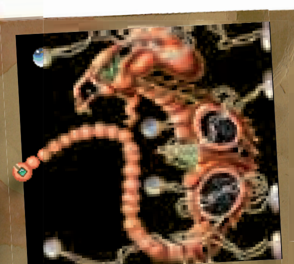
While *Chase HQ 3D* once again features sexy operator Nancy, it's unclear whether this is a 3D update of the original game, or a brand new outing. Considering the licensing problems that have stopped the original game from appearing on *Taito Legends 2*, we're expecting the latter. Taito's last new game is *Elevator Action 3D* and fans may be dismayed to hear that this update predictably uses a first-person viewpoint. How this is going to work is anyone's guess, but as long as Taito gets the all-important gameplay right then we don't really mind. All three games are currently available in the US and should be heading our way soon.



» *Rainbow Islands* (left) is already available on mobile phones. Let's hope the new *Chase HQ* is as good as the arcade original (below)



VILLAIN OF THE MONTH



DOBKERATOPS

Without a bad villain there would be no good heroes. What would Superman be without Lex Luthor? What would He-Man be without Skeletor? Rubbish, that's what. This month: *Dobkeratops*

First Appearance: *R-Type*

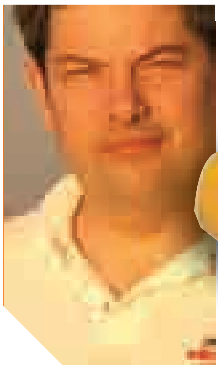
Distinguishing Features: Flexible tail, toothy grin

Weapon of Choice: Laser-spewing alien located in its gut

Most likely to: Destroy your R9 fighter

Least likely to: Burst out of John Hurt's chest

Unusual fact: *R-Type*'s first level boss goes by several other names including Doppelganger, Krell and Gladiator





» Atari's 1978 *Touch Me* – its only handheld game



» *Manhole* provided me with inspiration for IK+'s bonus stage

"AS A KID I WAS HOOKED ON MANHOLE, AND IT INSPIRED ME TO EXTEND ITS BASIC GAME MECHANIC INTO THE IK+ SIX-WAY BALL DEFLECTION GAME" ARCHER MACLEAN

COMMENT

GAME AND WATCH

MUSINGS FROM THE MIND OF MACLEAN



» The 1982 CGE game watch in all its glory

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away there was a handheld games market long forgotten – so far back that most PSP and DS owners don't know where the actual machines came from.

Whilst I might still be producing games on current handhelds, I was a kid living through the very start of the games industry.

Besides B&W arcade games and the Atari VCS/ColecoVision consoles in the mid-Seventies, I remember Mattel were first off the blocks with simple portable games machines that ran off loads of batteries and used grids of LEDs to act as a 'screen'. The first was *Mattel Football* in 1977, followed by dozens more. Shortly after, the handheld market exploded into life with hundreds of manufacturers trying to grab a slice of the pie.

Atari's first handheld was the 1978 *Touch Me* – a *Simple Simon* game of trying to reproduce a sequence of lights and sounds. It was based on its 1974 arcade game of the same name. Oddly, Milton Bradley's *Simon* game (which was also based on Atari's arcade game) was a big hit in 1977, but Atari didn't release *Touch Me* until a year later. *Simon* was more appealing, and sounded a lot better, whereas Atari's tiny handheld produced cheapo electronic squawks.

It wasn't until 1979/80 that anyone devised a handheld game system using games cartridges. The first of these was the Microvision, from Milton Bradley. However, many of these early handhelds suffered from major battery drain because they used TTL circuitry or power-hungry LEDs, and changing the batteries frequently defeated the object of portable gaming.

But one company came to dominate the handheld market throughout the Eighties and still does to this day – Nintendo! In 1980 it launched the first of 60 or so Game & Watch pocket-sized handhelds. These featured a low power LCD screen, one fixed game, and a clock with an alarm. Later variations saw dual screens, more complex LCD displays, widescreen modes, limited editions, bigger table-top ones, smaller keychain ones. One variation was the Micro VS system, which was a novel two-player game with detachable joypads contained within the case of the game unit, linked by a retractable connecting wire.

Nintendo continued to be the market-leader on handhelds, and went on to have enormous success with the Game Boy.

I have to pay homage to one game – *Manhole*. It first appeared in 1981 and I still have my original working one as shown in my pics. But for any fans of the balls/shield bonus game in *IK+*… take a look at the gameplay similarity. As a kid I was hooked on *Manhole*, and it inspired me to extend its basic game mechanic into the *IK+* six-way ball-deflection game.

One of my other hobbies is collecting and restoring mid-Seventies digital watches, specifically LED, very early LCD Seikos, and really exotic calculator watches. Some of these watches were very expensive back then and were produced in tiny numbers, but were superbly engineered. Some continue to maintain collector values into the £1,000's. But mass-production from about 1977/8 brought prices right down.

Inevitably, by 1982 dozens of arcade games started appearing on wristwatches, albeit simple imitations of the full size games. Some of these were quite good fun such as the Nelsonic *Frogger* and *Qbert* watches. Nelsonic did dozens of these, and they now appear regularly on eBay. But the prize one to find is the ultra-rare *Pac-Man* wristwatch complete with a teeny tiny removable joystick that plugs into the lower right-hand side of the watch front. Good ones can fetch £200+. Another collectible is the GCE Game-Time watch that had four 'action' games packed into it, but the case was plastic so finding a good one now is near impossible.

The best quality game watches were probably the stainless steel ones made by Pulsar/Seiko back in 1982. These were well made with an alarm, stopwatch, and simple *Space Invader* games.

One final point this month – like other contributors to Retro Gamer, I appreciate feedback from readers. I've written about a wide variety of subjects, but if you want to see any of us write up something specific, go take part in the www.retrogamer.net/forum and speak forth or forever hold your peace.



» Nelsonic 1982 *Pac-Man* Watch with removable joystick

eMag

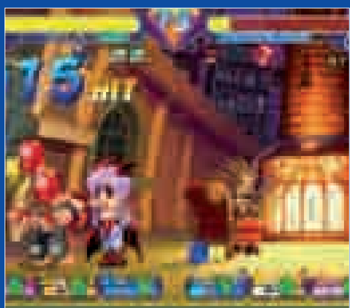
retro GAMER DIARY

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO…

EVENT HOSTING retro GAMER

IF YOU WANT RETRO GAMER TO PROMOTE UPCOMING GAMES AND EVENTS, CONTACT US AT RETROGAMER@IMAGINE-PUBLISHING.CO.UK

Just because Retro Gamer looks to the past that doesn't mean that there aren't games and events to look forward to. Every month we'll be listing suitable games and events for you to add to your 'to do' list.



JULY '06

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA ANTHOLOGY

Released: 07 July

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £39.99

Format: PS2

We love Capcom. Not only does it release innovative games (the incoming *Okami* looks amazing) it also showers plenty of love on retro gamers. We've been playing *Alpha Anthology* for the past few weeks (check the review out on page 92) and while it's let down by the PS2's dodgy digital pad it's still a great compilation that fans will love.



JULY '06

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS

Released: 07 July

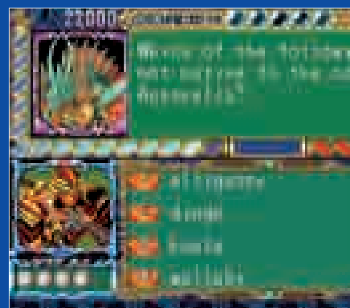
Publisher: Nintendo

Price: £34.99

Format: DS

All mother of all things holy. We've finally tracked down a US version of *New Super Mario Bros* and we can finally die happy. No review this month because we've spent far too long playing the damn thing, but rest assured it's very, very, good. In fact, this is easily the greatest Mario game since the amazing *Super Mario 64*.

Is it wrong to love Mario?



JULY '06

CAPCOM CLASSIC COLLECTION REMIXED

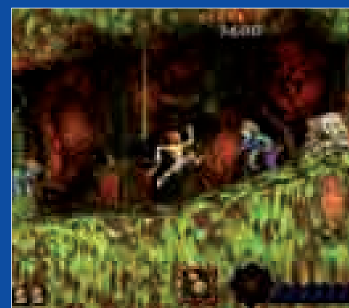
Released: 14 July

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

If you've given up hope that this fantastic compilation is ever going to be released then head on over to page 90 where we have an actual review. Now we've been able to have a lot more time with it, it's safe to say that this is one of the finest PSP compilations currently available. If you're a Capcom fan you need this UMD; it's that simple.



SEPTEMBER '06

ULTIMATE GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS

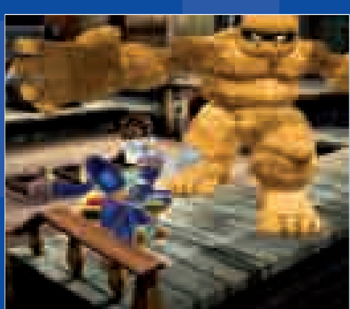
Released: September

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

It's a tad frustrating that *Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins* has been delayed until September, but judging by what we've played so far, it's definitely worth the wait. Like its recent *Megaman: Powered Up*, Capcom has taken the original game but added some stunning bells and whistles, most noticeably the glorious visuals and familiar music.



SEPTEMBER '06

POWER STONE

Released: September

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

We're getting rather embarrassed as the diary is swiftly turning into Capcom Corner. Still, if no other publishers are prepared to deliver the same sort of retro goodness then what can we do? Fans of the Dreamcast games will be pleased to hear that Capcom has added plenty of tweaks to its classic franchise and an early play already confirms that it still has the magic that made the original Dreamcast games so much fun to play.



SEPTEMBER '06

TAITO LEGENDS PSP

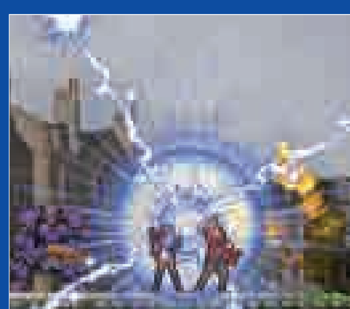
Released: September

Publisher: Xplosive

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

We've been pleading with Xplosiv to acquire the licence for this ever since the Japanese version was announced, and now it's finally confirmed the good news. Don't expect *Elevator Action Returns* in the palm of your hand though, as the majority of the games are from Taito's earlier years. Luckily, the four enhanced games that include *Cameltry, Balloon Bomber* and *Crazy Balloon* are set to be included.



OCTOBER '06

PORTRAIT OF RUIN

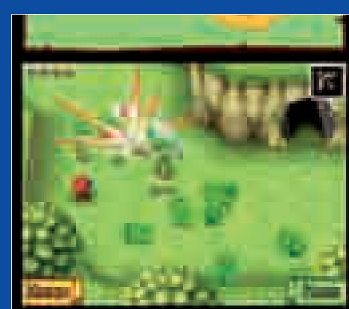
Released: 29 October

Publisher: Konami

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

Cleverly released in time for Halloween the next part of the *Castlevania* franchise is already looking mighty fine and is set to continue the high standards that were first seen in *Castlevania: Dawn Of Sorrow.* With a brand new setting (World War II), two new characters and plenty of new foes to fight, *Castlevania: Portrait Of Ruin* is already looking like an essential purchase. Expect to see a review in a later issue.



NOVEMBER '06

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: PHANTOM HOURGLASS

Released: Q4 2006

Publisher: Nintendo

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

Oh lordy, it's a *Zelda* game for the DS and it looks the business. While *Phantom Hourglass* features a similar graphical style to *The Wind Waker*, it's set to make full use of the DS's unique abilities and will allow for competitive play against another DS owner. With everything from Link's movement to combat being controlled by the stylus this could well be the most unique *Zelda* yet.

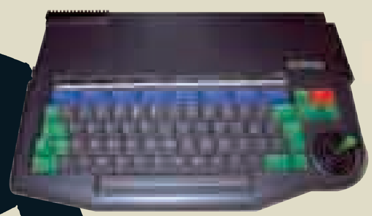
eMag

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM JULY 1986



July 1986 – the month when there was Flantastic news from Enterprise Computers and alas, poor Oric, good intentions that came to nothing. Add a sprinkling of new software houses and GOSH going AWOL for a seasonally summary news summary. Richard Burton shows you what's what…



» Boldly going where no computer has gone before… back to the supplier because nobody bought one

GOSH, the Guild Of Software Houses succumbed to apathy from the companies that were supposedly supporting it. GOSH was formed in 1983 to combat software piracy. It occasionally teamed up with FAST, the Federation Against Software Theft, in an attempt to stop cash haemorrhaging into the hands of pirates. Problems arose for GOSH when accusations of favouritism between software houses led to some companies not being invited to join. Both Software Projects and Imagine were left in the wilderness. It created a fragmented Guild that, ultimately, fell apart.

Remember the Oric? You thought it was dead and gone, right? Think again. Those plucky Frenchies who took over Oric Products in 1985 when it went belly-up, proclaimed its intention to release its newly developed computer, the Oric Telestrat.

The anticipated machine was to come with a range of interfaces, take cartridge software as well as having the benefit of a disc drive. However, with a price tag of just over £400, it was hard to see how the machine would fit into the gaming market.

With Amstrad and its CPC machines and refreshed Spectrum range and Commodore with its newly designed C64c, ready to hit the shops, there seemed little room for manoeuvre in a saturated market. Established systems already had a solid foothold and it was going to be difficult to muscle in on their territory. And so it proved. A combination of the price tag and the range of cheaper systems with better software back catalogues, ensured the Telestrat never saw a shop shelf. Enterprise Computers, makers of the Elan/Flan/Enterprise computer, went into receivership after three years of manufacturing. The company appeared to have a computer with good specifications on their hands, which had the potential to leave its mark in the home computing world. Unfortunately constant delays and setbacks meant the Enterprise appeared late on the scene and missed the majority of the expansion in home computing, which Sinclair and Commodore had both capitalised on. From that point on, neither the computer nor the company fully recovered.

Beyond Software, publishers of classics like *Lords Of Midnight*, announced the licensing coup of the year by attaining the rights to publish an official *Star Trek* game from Paramount Pictures. *Lords Of Midnight* creator, Mike Singleton, headed the programming team who planned to produce the game, already titled *Star Trek: The Rebel Universe*, sometime in the coming autumn.

The idea was that it would be out in the shops to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the *Star Trek* TV series. Unfortunately, the development was plagued by continual problems and setbacks and the intention of releasing a Commodore 64 and ZX Spectrum version never materialized for Beyond.

Not only were there new games springing up but two new software labels too, albeit subsidiaries of existing companies. A new software house, Piranha Software, part of the Macmillan Group, announced their releases for the autumn schedule. The first two games planned were tie-in licences. Rogue Trooper, a character from the tomes of sci-fi comic 2000AD, and *The Trap Door*, the plasticine animated TV series featuring Berk, Boni, Drutt and a multitude of creepy crawlies. Also lined up for future release was *Nosferatu The Vampyre*, an atmospheric 3D game in the style of *Fairlight*, and *Strike Force Cobra*.



» She cannae take it Captain… the Commodore 64 released, the Spectrum version stuck forever in a spacial anomaly



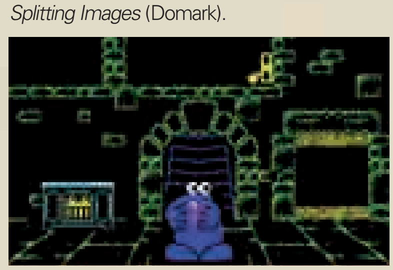
» One of the first 2000AD computer game tie-in's. Question is: when are the ABC Warriors getting a game?!

The other new software house preparing to make its autumnal debut was Faster Than Light, a new set-up from Gargoyle Games. FTL would primarily concentrate on arcade style games leaving the adventure side of things to Gargoyle. The first two titles awaiting release would be *Shockway Rider*, featuring moving pathways, brick-throwing yobs and decapitations, and *Lightforce*, a standard space shooter.

Fist II, the sequel to *The Way Of The Exploding Fist*, released the previous year by Melbourne House, had its official release date announced for mid-August. It would initially get its introduction on the C64 with further conversions to other systems later in the year.

July 1986 saw quality games throughout the pages of Newsfield Publications' fabled threesome of computer magazines.

For Spectrum gamesters, Crash Smash awards were handed out to *Jack The Nipper* (Gremlin Graphics), *Ghosts & Goblins* (Elite Systems), *The Price Of Magik* (Level 9) and *Splitting Images* (Domark).



» Berk with worm in hand goes looking to feed "him upstairs". Great game and a great TV show. Globbits!

THIS MONTH IN... CHARTS

1986



» For every royal event, there is a cheap and nasty souvenir waiting to burst out

JULY NEWS

On the 23rd July, the nation saw another Royal wedding. Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson married at Westminster Abbey before an estimated worldwide TV audience of 500 million people. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Robert Runcie, led the ceremony with Prince Edward as Prince Andrew's Best Man. Sarah Ferguson was good comedic value during the vows by getting the name of her husband-to-be wrong. It didn't bode well for the future…

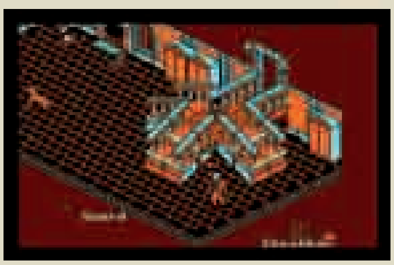
Estate agent, Suzy Lamplugh, disappeared on the 30th July whilst on a meeting with a prospective client. The man, known to have booked the appointment in advance, was known as Mr Kipper. Although formerly declared dead in 1994, her body has never been found nor a suspect established for the crime and it remains one of the most intriguing modern criminal mysteries.



» Suzy Lamplugh disappeared during a house-viewing appointment. Her body was never found

The 27th July saw the first ever non-European winner of the famous Tour de France cycle race. American racer, Greg LeMond, won the first of his three Tour titles beating Frenchman Bernard Hinault into second place. Hinault, himself a five-time winner of the Tour, did not finish empty-handed, claiming the polka dot King Of The Mountains jersey.

Frank Bruno was attempting to win the boxing World Heavyweight Championship belt from reigning champion, Tim Witherspoon, at Wembley Stadium on the 19th July. Although the match was fairly even up to the ninth round, an awkwardly landed punch by Bruno caused him to break a wrist and he was unable to continue the fight.



» *Piranha's* underrated isometric game was atmospheric to play and graphically very pleasing on the eye



» With Naughtyometer rising and Nappy Rash at critical levels, Jack seems destined for a trip to Sudocrem City

This must have been before *Spitting Image* and Central Television had caught wind of the similarity between the game and its satirical puppet show and politely asked Domark to change the game's title. It eventually metamorphosed into *Split Personalities*.

Over in Amtixland, CPC owners had the following Amtix Accolades: *Starquake* (Bubble Bus Software), *Tomohawk* (Digital Integration), *The Fifth Axis* (Activision/Loriciels), Equinox (Mikro-Gen), *Swords & Sorcery* (PSS) and *Monty On The Run* (Gremlin Graphics).

Zzap!64 readers had a classic Gold Medal winner backed up by a selection of Sizzlers.

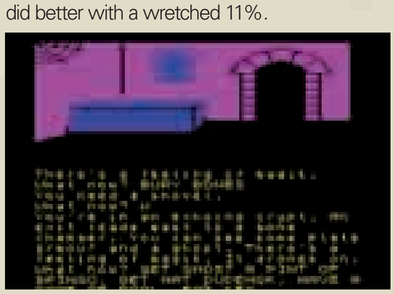
Top dog for the month was the golfing game *Leaderboard* (US Gold). Sizzledom was bestowed upon *Boulderdash III* (First Star Software) and a trio of budget releases from Americana. *Go For The Gold!*, reviewed under former manifestation as *HES Games*, *Slamball* and *Sentinel*, all received a Sizzler award.

Three Sizzlers in one issue was impressive for a budget label but they did have a lot of representation with 11 offerings.

The best of the best of their worst? The awful *Neutral Zone* with 9%. Even *World Cup Carnival* by US Gold, also reviewed this month, did better with a wretched 11%.

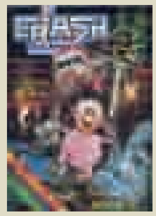


» With more scope for wandering and tasks to complete, *Fist II* was a bit of a departure from the original WOTEF format



» You are in a crypt. You see a bargain bucket and a pint of Spingo. What now?

Crash Flash



Issue 30 featured a cover starring Jack the Nipper with in an outburst of chaotic disorder. Gluing dentures, smashing plates and shooting a cat up the arse with a pistol, the cartoon-like cover was certainly a departure from Mr Frey's usual style.



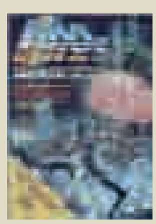
Zzap! Back



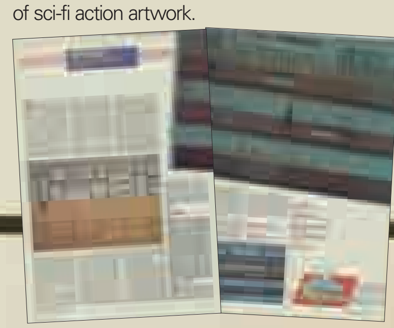
With a distinctly summery feel to the cover, Zzap!64 issue 15 featured a very pouty blonde girl sucking the living daylights out of an ice-lolly whilst a group of lads gawp on. Without doubt, they were all wishing to be reincarnated as a Mini Milk in their next life.



Amtix! Antics

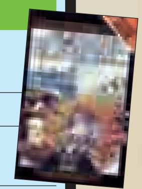


Amtix! Issue 9 avoided the atypical style and content influencing its sister magazines and featured themed artwork based on Activision's *The Fifth Axis* game, awarded an Accolade in the review pages. A splendid piece of sci-fi action artwork.



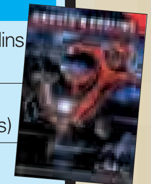
JUNE 1986

AMSTRAD



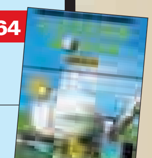
1 Kane (Mastertronic)
2 Elite (Firebird)
3 Ghosts And Goblins (Elite)
4 Harvey Headbanger (Firebird)
5 Radzone (Mastertronic)

SPECTRUM



1 Ghosts And Goblins (Elite)
2 Jack The Nipper (Gremlin Graphics)
3 Molecule Man (Mastertronic)
4 Kung Fu Master (US Gold)
5 Ninja Master (Firebird)

COMMODORE 64



1 Leaderboard (US Gold)
2 Ghosts and Goblins (Elite)
3 Green Beret (Imagine)
4 Speed King (Mastertronic)
5 Knight Games (English Software)

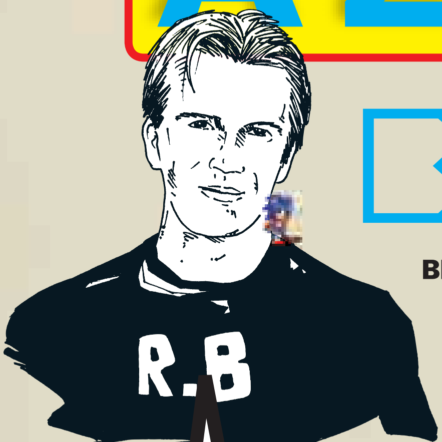
MUSIC SINGLES CHART JUNE '86

1 Papa Don't Preach (Madonna)
2 My Favourite Waste Of Time (Owen Paul)
3 The Edge Of Heaven/ Where Did Your Heart Go? (Wham!)
4 Happy Hour (The Housemartins)
5 Let's Go All The Way (Sly Fox)



BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

A-Z OF THE 80s



Take a trip through some classic, cult and retro moments of the Eighties. Some may have originated earlier but all made significant Eighties appearances with all guaranteed to raise a smile and a knowing nod of appreciation. Feeling warm and gooey? That's nostalgia that is…

B IS FOR…

BLUES BROTHERS (THE)

"It's 106 miles to Chicago, we've got a tank full of gas, half a pack of cigarettes, it's dark and we're wearing sunglasses… hit it!" The super-brief synopsis of the movie sees Joliet Jake getting out of prison, getting his band back together, helping save the children's home both he and his brother were raised in and then heading back to the State Penitentiary in time for a bit of tea and Elvis.

It's a terrific film that takes you on a remarkable musical journey highlighting the best blues and soul artists, with unforgettable performances making it so much more than just a car crash film.

With Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi starring in their *Saturday Night Live* roles and supported by cameos from Steven Spielberg, Frank Oz and Carrie Fisher, you have a film guaranteed to raise the spirits.

BUCKAROO

Buckaroo – a game of skill and nerve. The aim of the game was to balance various plastic implements, from horseshoes to banjos, onto the saddle without them being ejected liberally around the lounge.

For extra chuckles you could watch your old aunt have a 'funny turn', such was the impending anticipation/shock ratio mixed with the outright ferocity of the explosion from the plastic ass once it was over burdened with accessories. Ooh, I say…

BIG TRAK

MB Games created one of the iconic toys, Big Trak. The plastic tank looked like the vehicle out of Ultimate's *Lunar Jetman* and could be programmed to do tasks such as manoeuvre around nests of tables, transport cake and generally become grounded on anything fluffier than a piece of lino.

However, once the novelty factor of programming it to drive around your lounge without hitting anything whilst delivering your dads slippers (one at a time mind, you didn't want to overload it) had worn off, if was destined for a life in the attic and later, eBay. A great looking bit of kit though.



» Here comes Bod and Derek Griffiths going mad with a penny whistle. Great tune



BOD

Here comes *Bod*. The catchy theme and the magnificence of John Le Mesurier's narration of the stories of Bod, Farmer Barleymow, Frank the Postman, PC Copper and Aunt Flo created a cult classic for 30-somethings everywhere. Constantly repeated throughout the Eighties, it captured the imagination for its sheer simplicity.

But, let's not forget the real star of the show, Alberto Frog and his Magnificent Animal Band. So Alberto, what milkshake are you having today? A strawberry shake with double lardburger and chicken McFlurry? How times have changed…

BUTTON MOON

"We're off to Button Moon, we'll follow Mr Spoon, Button Moon, Button Moooooon". Well, quite. Mr Spoon, who was predominantly more bottle than spoon, would blast off to Button Moon (which hung in Blanket Sky) in his baked-bean-tin-rocket from his abode, Cardboard Box House, to see what utensil-based weirdness was occurring. *Button Moon* was memorable kid's television but the theme tune gave it that extra bit of oomph. Not only was it a catchy little ditty, but it was sung by a Timelord and his better half. Peter "*Doctor Who*" Davison and his wife of the time, Sandra Dickinson, were the voices behind the song. I wonder where Gallifrey was in Blanket Sky?

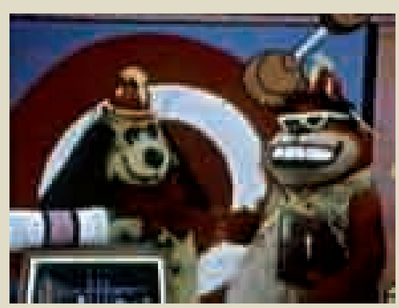
BANANA SPLITS (THE)

Born of the late Sixties, the man-sized assortment of creatures known as the Banana Splits graced Eighties Saturday morning TV for several years. Fleegle, Bingo, Snorky and Drooper, the four main characters would bring madness and chaos to our woodgrained-encased TV screens.

Every episode involved several regular slots like the Cuckoo Clock and a cartoon interlude of which Tales Of The Arabian Knights was probably the most memorable. So what were they up to when they weren't flipping like a pancake and popping like a cork? There was always one absolute certainty every single episode; they would run into each other a lot. This would invariably be followed by more running, more falling over, falling over a bit more and occasionally, to vary things, they would bump into objects (no doubt falling over in the process).



» Was Mr Spoon's rocket made out of a Heinz baked bin tin or not? It had better quality sauce/fuel apparently



» Fleegle and Bingo discuss the political upheavals facing the Ukraine and Baltic States… and then fall over.





» The gizmo that made time travel real (sort of) – the flux capacitor

After minutes of hilarious mayhem, Fleegle would ensure order was restored by whacking his huge mallet on the floor making everyone (wait for it) fall over. Pure TV gold. Did I mention the Tra La La song?

BACK TO THE FUTURE

1.21 gigawatts? Great Scott! If there was ever a film that brought back a tidal wave of nostalgia then *Back To The Future* must be it. Marty McFly travels back to 1955 to get his parents back together after inadvertently changing the future. Time travel you say? Ooh, that has gotta be complicated? Well, no not really.

Take Michael J Fox and Christopher Lloyd, a Delorean car converted into a time travel machine, add one flux capacitor and a coffee grinder stuck to the roof and combine with a superb story that flows effortlessly, garnish with plenty of humour and you have a thoroughly gratifying 1985 family movie. There's very few more likeable films around.

BOY GEORGE

Boy George (O'Dowd) and Culture Club certainly brought colour to the early Eighties. Making his musical debut in 1982 Boy George was turning heads with his cross-gender look, interesting choice of dress and natty dreads from the moment he appeared.

With hits like Church Of The Poison Mind and Do You Really Want To Hurt Me reinforcing his already strong persona and public image, Boy George became synonymous with the early/mid-Eighties. Grannies liked him; kids liked him and a few uncles who had no idea who he was, admitted to fancying him. Boy George was, and indeed, still is, a Karma Chameleon.

BROS

The Goss Brothers and Craig Logan took the Eighties charts by storm with a (admittedly rather small) string of hits including When Will I Be Famous and I Owe You Nothing. When Logan left in 1988 the twin brothers continued as a duo, although in reality it signalled the beginning of the end for the band.

Bros during its heyday had a big female following calling themselves Brosettes. Dressed in a similar style to their idols, the girls would don worn ripped jeans, dodgy Bros jackets and a sturdy pair of DMs with beer bottle tops attached to the laces. Only in the Eighties…

BLACKADDER

Huzzah! *Blackadder*, voted the second best UK sitcom ever, follows the trials and tribulations of Edmund Blackadder and his stinking wretch of a companion, Baldrick (and his cunning plans), through four different periods of the *Blackadder* family tree.

Blackadder was superb. Scripted by Ben Elton and Richard Curtis, it combined enormously funny scripts with a quality of acting not normally associated with comedy sitcoms. What most people enjoy is the sarcasm and verbal cruelty of Edmund as he tears into anyone within shouting distance.

Then there are the characters to adore. Edmund and Baldrick, Lord Flashheart, the Prince Regent, Nursie, Melchett, Queenie, Mrs Miggins, Captain Darling… the list goes on and on, as did the terrific quotes.

If you were ever lost for a comedy catchphrase, *Blackadder* had them in abundance. With gems like "This place stinks like a pair of armoured trousers after the Hundred Years War. Baldrick, have you been eating dung again?" to the simple and effective, "Wibble!"

Surely it must be time for a new series of *Blackadder*?









» The Bangles will always be remembered for Manic Mondays and Walk Like An Egyptian







» The G-Force gang and Zoltar also made the jump from the TV screen onto the computer screen

MORE B's!

TOYS YOU HAD TO OWN

- Barbie Dolls
- BMX Bikes
- Big Yellow Teapot
- Boglins
- Battleship
- Buzz Off!

OTHER BANDS YOU SWOONED OVER

- Bananarama
- The Bangles
- Bucks Fizz
- Billy Idol
- Brother Beyond
- Band Aid

MORE TV SHOWS YOU LOVED

- Blockbusters
- Blakes 7
- Buck Rogers In The 25th Century
- Battlestar Galactica
- Beauty And The Beast
- Benson

MORE FILMS YOU WERE WATCHING

- Batteries Not Included
- Beverly Hills Cop
- Big Trouble In Little China
- Batman
- Beetlejuice
- Blade Runner

KIDS SHOWS YOU WERE ENJOYING

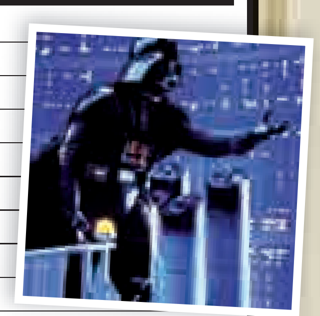
- Bananaman
- Barbapapa
- Big John, Little John
- Battle Of The Planets
- Beat The Teacher
- Bagpuss

CHARTS!

Highest Grossing Movies of 1980

1	The Empire Strikes Back ($290.2m*)
2	Superman II ($108.2m)
3	9 to 5 ($103.3m)
4	Stir Crazy ($101.3m)
5	Airplane! ($83.4m)
6	The Coal Miner's Daughter ($79.9m)
7	Private Benjamin ($69.8m)
8	Smokey and the Bandit II ($66.1m)
9	Ordinary People ($54.8m)
10	The Blues Brothers ($54.2m)

* Includes pre-2002 releases



» I am your father, Obi Wan is your mother and you're not having any tea. Go to your room Skywalker

THE RETRO FORUM

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



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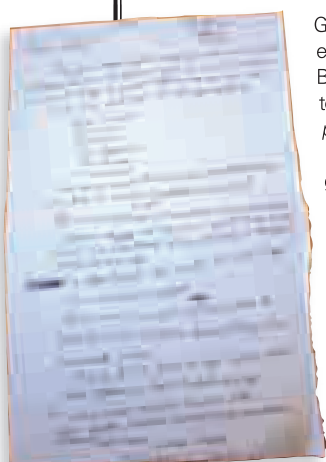
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STAR LETTER!

RETRO, HELP!

I've been buying your mag since issue one, cos I like playing games, and its been good to see old mag coveres and all kinds of gameing stuff ive not seen for years.But ive just gone to bed after playing –
Space invaders
Pac man
Galaxian
Qix (Kwiks)
Pole Position
Lunar Lander



God knows what else! All plug n play! But none are true to archade, (except *phoenix*) why! why!

These are archade games. Wher gaming began, before home or schools or youth clubs, pubs where we should'nt of been playing in the first place at our age.

Anyone who reads this mag I hope can understand my prob.

Retro means (in my head) being able to play games (in whatever format) they where originally made.

Why is it so hard to get classic games done poperly in this Computerised age.

P.S. where have archade classics like – *astro blaster, Scramble, Bezerk, Gorf, moon Cresta, Vanguard* all gone.

Love Mark
Can I have a T.shirt X
Can u let me know if u gonna print this cos it's it's hell of job getting this mag wher I live. X

P.S. 2 (Get it)
Im quite drunk

Thanks Mark, not only have you gone an extra mile by delivering your masterpiece on a huge piece of cartridge paper, you've also provided us with one of the (unintentionally) funniest letters we've read in ages. Congratulations, you've earned yourself a brand new Fossil watch. Don't drink it though.

FANTASY FOOTBALL

Dear Retro Gamer,
After recently purchasing an Amiga 600 from eBay, I felt that I had to write in and tell you about one of the games that had been included with it.

Created by Dino Dini for Anco, the game I'm referring to is the wonderful *Player Manager*. It's a fantastic title and I can't for the life of me work out why it hasn't been considered for an update like so many other classic games.

With some tweaks here and there I'm confident that it could rival the likes of *Football Manager* and *Championship Manager*.

Does anyone at Retro Gamer share my thoughts?

Robert Budd, Essex



» Sadly we no longer have our Amiga 600, we upgraded it for a spanking new 1200. Mmmm, shiny…

The problem is that the football management genre is niche and fiercely loyal. While it's quite possible that an updated version of Dino's game may work, with so many publishers already having similar products, it would need to be something really special. Your best bet is to stick with the original.



EVERY MONTH ONE lucky reader will receive a cool Fossil arcade watch courtesy of those lovely people at Fossil and Atari. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls; failing that, something funny with swear words in it will go down just as well…

WIKI-FILED

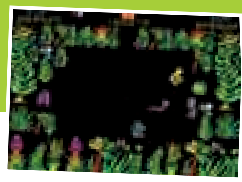
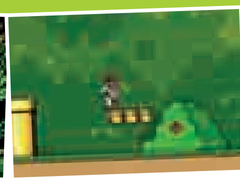
I remember, in 1998, standing outside WHSmiths in Bristol waiting for it to open so I could buy a Game Boy Color and *Tetris DX* before getting on a coach to London. It was launch day and when it finally opened there was no sign of Nintendo's new console.

Luckily, the lady at the entertainment till was happy to go out back and see if there were any new deliveries and there were! I managed to make the coach with just minutes to spare and the following four hours simply flew by.

So thanks for your excellent article on this forgotten and vastly underrated machine. It's prompted me to start filling in the missing details for it on GamerWiki, which is the main reason why I've written to you. I know that your readers love games, and there's so much knowledge floating around the Internet if you're prepared to look for it. GamerWiki is designed to capture that! It's an online collaborative encyclopaedia, which aims eventually to be a comprehensive resource on all types of videogames. It's easy to contribute and, dare I say it, pretty addictive. It would be fantastic if your readers could pop by and see if they can help out!

Tim Miller, London






Glad you enjoyed the feature Tim, the Game Boy Color really is a superb little machine and it's a shame that the DS is unable to play any of its games, as it would be a great way for newer gamers to catch up on it. Still, we've seen the console itself go for as little as £15 in places like GameStation, so they're fairly easy to obtain. GamerWiki sounds like a great idea, I'm sure our readers will love to help out. We might even make a contribution ourselves if we have a few spare minutes.

HELP!

Dear Darran,

I think your magazine is tops! Well done on such diverse research and creativity. Keep up the good work.

I am currently searching for an Arcade Laserdisc game called *Derby Day*. It originally appeared in the arcades around 1981, but I cannot remember who made it (although they apparently went bust around 1984/86.

The game included real films of North American horse races and featured coin-operated computer screens. There were ten different races with ten horses in each race and you could select and bet on your choices.

I have looked on sites such as the excellent Dragon's Lair Project, but they have only suggested *Quarter Horse*, which is similar but not the same game (unless it somehow evolved into it.)

As you seem to have articles on other laserdisc games like *Dragon's Lair*, I was hoping that you might be able to help me out.

Mr I. Littledale via email

We've tried a few contacts, but have been unable to shed any further light on this particular game. Maybe this is something one of our readers will be able to help you out with…



FROM THE FORUM

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE ASKING A QUESTION ON THE FORUM AND PRINTING THE BEST REPLIES. THIS MONTH WE ASKED: WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE RETRO ERA? HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF YOUR ANSWERS

ID: C4

The 16-bit console era! Both the Mega Drive and the Super NES were more or less evenly matched. Even in those areas where one console was weak in quality in one genre compared to the other, it was stronger than the other in another genre. There were also a number of quality multi-format titles on the market during this period (*Bomberman* for example) in addition to the quality games exclusive to one console.

ID: Mr pointless

16-bit. Even though I was introduced to gaming (sort of) by way of my dad's Oric, it was when I started using an Amiga (*Cartoon Classics* pack) when I gave gaming more attention. And the controls were better then too. One stick, one fire button (although many sticks came with more they all did the same thing).

ID: merman

The current era, with modern PCs and consoles using their power to provide emulation, and even new games for old machines…

ID: Xtatic

8-bit until 1993 on the Commodore 64. Great games were made when the C64 was dying: *Creatures*, *Rubicon*, *Turrican 1&2*, *Winter Camp*, just to name a few. These games really pushed the hardware to the limit and had great graphics and sound. Funny… When I made the transition to the 16-bit (Mega Drive, SNES), I never got the same enthusiasm as I got when I played those games.

ID: LeeT

It's gotta be the 8-bit era, specifically 1985-88 – The time when a lot of original games were produced and after that period it became the norm just to release licensed products. Sure there was quite a few dud titles around at that time, but the games industry was still in relative childhood and anything was possible.

ID: El Duchee

It's the SNES for me; I just loved *Super Mario World*. Can't look past that.

ID: swainy

Got to be the 8-bits & Arcades from around 1983 to 1989. Everything was new back then.

ID: DonkeySpank

For me, it's the 8-bit era without doubt. The Speccy, C64 and Atari Woody had personality by the bucket load, probably due in no small part to the fact that they simply couldn't compete graphically with the local arcade. They therefore made up for it with quirky titles that oozed charm – even the arcade conversions themselves had personality.

ID: forestville

The 8-bit era 1987-1989 is the one for me. At that time I had a Speccy 128k with many cool 128k games, inc Where *Time Stood Still*, *Saburture 2*; I left school in 1988 and had that bit more money to buy tape-based games from Boots, WHSmith etc. The mags of the time where also cool.

ID: jonathan

All periods are not without merit, but the 8-bit era from 1983 onwards stands out above others. Gaming was still in its infancy and new genres were being invented all the time. Alas, as graphics and sound improved over time and development teams grew bigger, innovation started to suffer.

ID: Elgin_McQueen

16-bit, with a dash of 8-bit, you could come and go from Mega Drive to Master System to SNES and onwards, everything gaming seemed exciting as so much was going on and the future looked golden.

ID: Rayek

I'm going to have to say the 16-bit era. I grew up around that era, and many of my favourite games (and many of my favourite franchises) began there. It was also then that Sega tasted the flavour of victory for the first time, if only for a short moment. And what a moment that was!

ID: The_Chief

The Eighties baby! The ZX Spectrum 128k was my favourite piece of kit ever. Three channels of sound it had, which back then was quite something. *Cobra*, *Elite*, *Green Beret*, *The Great Escape*, *Head Over Heels*, *Match Day 2* – all great games. I could go on and on, but I won't, because I should get back to work.

THE RETRO FORUM



» Either these individuals are extremely eco friendly or they've just pulled off the ultimate car boot heist

GREEN GAMING

Hi Darran,
I've been a massive fan since your second issue and thoroughly love the new format. I was delighted when I found out that you'd switched publishers rather than just disappearing forever!

I'm very interested in protecting the environment and unfortunately the Retro Gamer hobby generally precludes environmentalism due to the amount of electricity and batteries that our beloved consoles and computers use. Not to mention the amount of paper removed from the recycling loop due to the hording instinct of your average Retro Gamer.

I'd be very interested to hear your thoughts on the effect of our hobby on the world in general as well as your thoughts on perhaps releasing your great magazine in some sort of purchasable digital format. I would imagine that after the cost of putting such a system in place that bandwidth would be your only concern. I know that The Times does well using such a method of delivery and I'm sure that the majority of the RG community has some sort of handheld device with them most of the time capable of reading various formats.

Keep up the great work
Pete 'Speedwolf' Haughie, via email

That's a very interesting point you've raised there Pete, and one that we've ashamedly not really given much consideration. It's unlikely that Retro Gamer will ever appear exclusively as a digital form, but it's certainly something that we could look into. As for concerns about old systems harming the environment it's definitely going to make those that emulate feel a lot better.

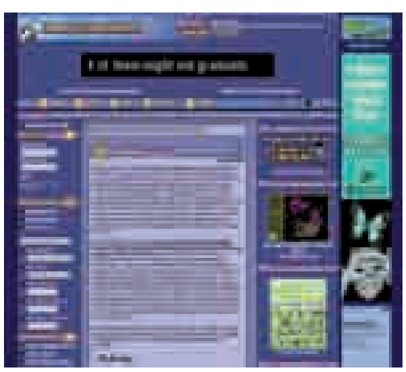
OUT OF SITE

Hi Retro Gamer Team
I am concerned! I have always made Home of the Underdogs (http://www.the-underdogs.org/) my first port of call when looking for Abandonware as it is both the largest site and also very well maintained, but when I went to it recently I found that the site was for sale. I was also disappointed to find that the Amiga retro site Back 2 Roots (http://www.back2roots.org/) has also disappeared with its site not being displayed.

I hope that these two sites have not disappeared forever as, apart from the games, they also supplied a wealth of other useful information. Perhaps with your contacts you will be able to find out the fate of these sites, as I feel certain that there are many other readers of your magazine who would be as interested as I am.

Glen Barnes, via email

Don't worry Glen, Underdogs is alive and well and after a few administration problems it's now back at a brand new site. Head on over to http://www.the-underdogs.info/ in order to live out all your abandonware fantasies.



» The amazing Home of the Underdogs is back and better than ever. Now where's *Eye of the Beholder* disappeared to?

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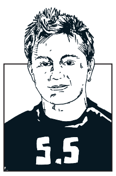


BATTLETOADS & DOUBLE DRAGON: TH

ENTER THE TOAD



- » **PUBLISHER:** TRADEWEST
- » **RELEASED:** 1993
- » **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SEGA MEGA DRIVE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £2+



HISTORY

One of the things I like about beat-'em-ups is that you don't need to understand the back-story before you can fully appreciate the game. In fact, most of the time it's not until your knuckles are red from the blood of three score enemies and ten until you bother to find out what the game's even called.

But when industry legends, Rare, delivered the most mismatched team you're ever likely to see blundering its way up the hull of an alien spaceship, even us slow-witted beat-'em-up junkies paused for a moment to scratch our simian brows. A quick dissection with a rusty blade might help clear things up:

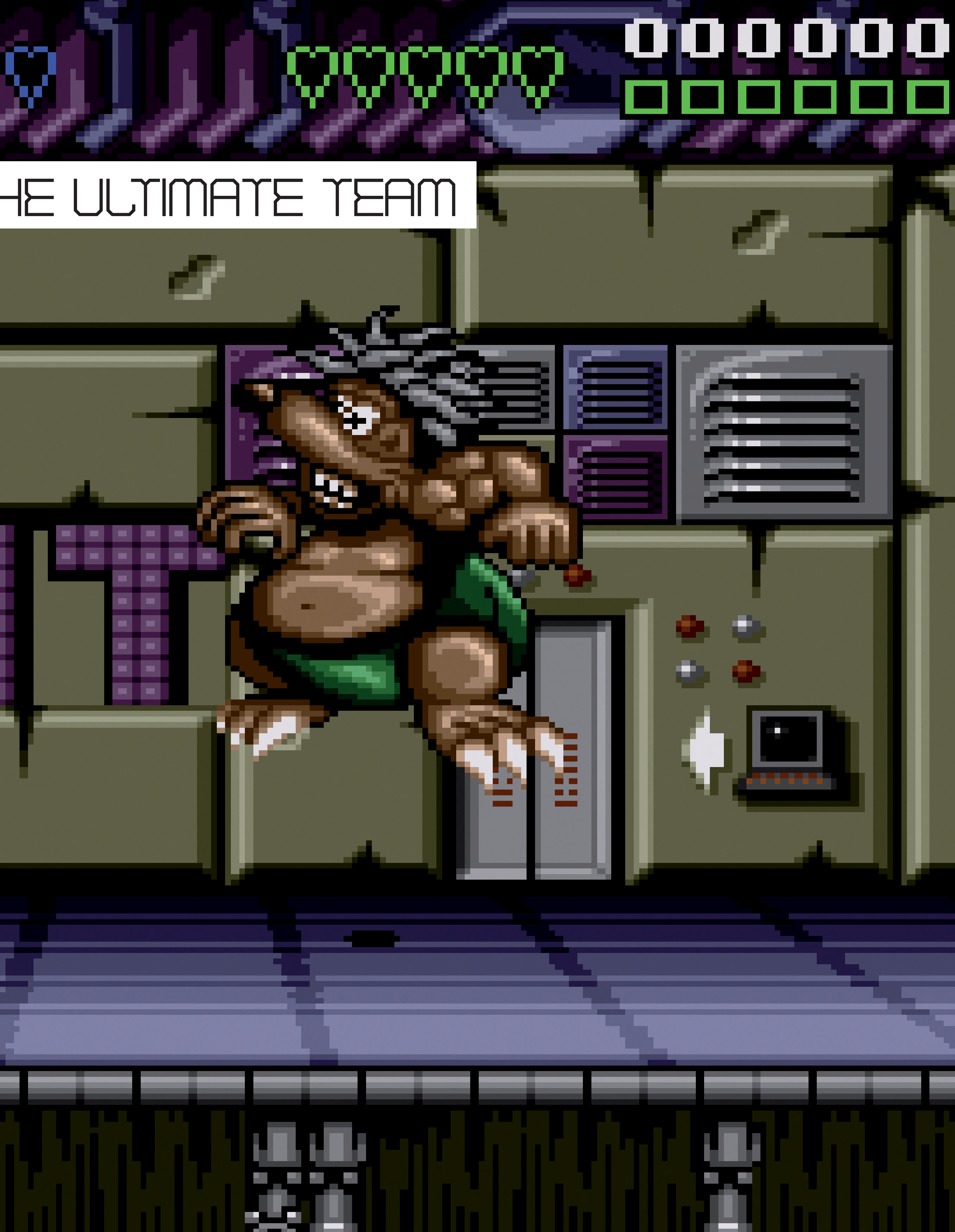
The Battletoads (with the somewhat expository names of Rash, Zitz and Pimple – used to establish such character's prerequisite adolescence) were one of the many anthropomorphic, streetwise, ass-kicking amphibians thrown up in the wake of those Ninja Turtles. *Double Dragon*, as you know, consists of Billy and Jimmy Lee who starred in Technos' revolutionary fighting game of 1987 (if you didn't know that, you're no longer allowed to read Retro Gamer), and for some bizarre, licence-related reason were also cast into this facetious cartoon fray.

There seems to be no cause at all for the Toads and the Dragons to get together other than their respective arch-nemeses forming an equally unlikely alliance. The result, however, is an addictive, quirky brawler with plenty of variety (like hanging off the side of a spaceship, racing hover bikes and twiddling robot legs as weapons), which could best be compared with the classic NES mini-brawler, *River City Ransom*.

Battletoads & Double Dragon is guaranteed to provide players with a good hour-and-three-quarters of Mega Drive mayhem (or SNES shenanigans, if you're so inclined) without having to expend any precious neurons in the process. And if you ever figure out what Abobo's doing on a spaceship, or why Billy Lee's rasslin' a giant rat, let me know, eh?

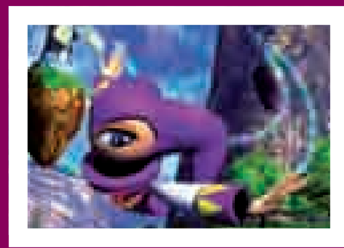
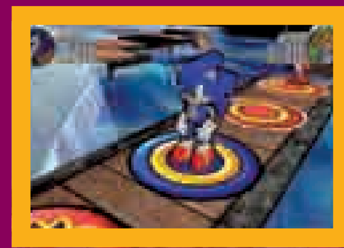


HE ULTIMATE TEAM



SONIC TEAM

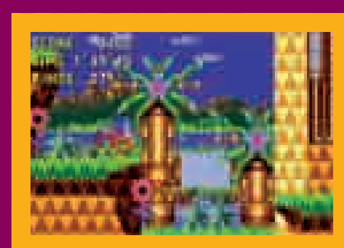
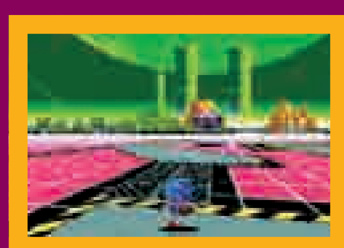
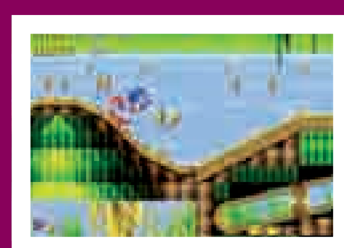


SEAN SMITH LOOKS AT THE RISE AND FALL OF ONE OF SEGA'S GREAT DEVELOPMENT TEAMS...





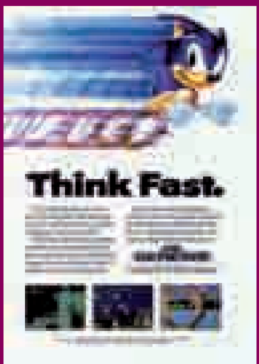







It's hard to believe that more than 15 years have passed since the world-renowned Sonic Team that we all know and love came crashing into a million living rooms in a blur of blue spines, Nintendo-baiting attitude and breath-taking speed. Sean Smith takes the opportunity to look back at the legendary Sega subsidiary, and even got to chat with a bona-fide legend



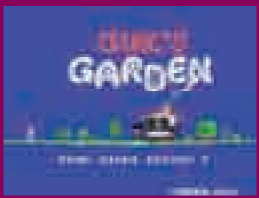
» Where the magic happens. Sonic Team was born inside this building



» A classic, word heavy US ad from the early Nineties. In your face, Mario!

IN THE KNOW

Sonic Team, originally Sega AM8, took its name from the classic game it created in 1991. Formed in Japan, the company split in pieces in 1999 with some staff relocating to form a new team in the USA. The original lineup of developers has now all but disbanded; Sonic Team exists in name only. Founder member Yuji Naka has formed a new studio, and Sonic Team USA is no more.



» Where it all started for Mr Naka waaaay back when

Before 1991, Sega may well have had a 16-bit machine to have a decent crack at the console war with, but it certainly didn't have a mascot who was fit enough to lick the boots of Nintendo's beloved plumber. Alex Kidd – the nearest thing Sega had to a games hero – may have been reasonably entertaining, but at the time the Mega Drive console was usually bundled with the decidedly dodgy *Altered Beast*, and save for a few arcade conversions there was little to set it apart from its competitors. The folks at Sega HQ needed this situation to change, and change quickly, and most people who are old enough to remember or come with a modicum of games-related knowledge should know what happened next. Sega bigwigs demand satisfaction, crack existing talent, form whizzy new team, latent design genius creates edgy, too cool-for-school character, advertising campaign goes into overdrive, outcome is Sonic Team, the most recognisable Sega development team of all, the rest as they say is history.

Wind forward a little though. Taking a look at the last commercially successful games to display the Sonic Team logo, the atrocious *Shadow The Hedgehog* and the poor *Sonic Riders*, and you have to ask: what happened to these elite development bods? How come that, while the Sonic Team name still exists, the key members of staff have pretty much deserted in their entirety? Needless to say there has been a lot of conflict in between, with bitter departures, duff decisions and Sega obviously no longer part of the hardware war.

It was certainly apparent that Yuji Naka had his mind on other matters when we spoke to him recently. In our own inimitably enthusiastic manner, we asked the great man what it was like to work for the legendary team, and to describe the atmosphere there. "Sonic Team is a very enjoyable place to work at. It is a very worthwhile thing to be able to work with people who have the same aspirations as yourself." His stunted responses did not stretch far in terms of revelations or exclusive content. When asked about which title he was most proud of, rather than wax lyrical about any of the cast-in-stone classics covered elsewhere in this very feature, he answered in a non-committal fashion: "I am proud of every single game I've been involved with. I am not going to say they are all the best, but they do all reflect the hard work and thought put into them at the time we were creating them." That's that cleared up, then.

After his somewhat cautious replies it came as no surprise to us when Naka announced on May 8th 2006 that he was to depart from Sonic Team to form his own development team, named PROPE. For many, this announcement represents the 'true' end of Sonic Team, particularly given the fact that some ten or more staff members have been poached for the purpose. Partially funded by Sega, it will be interesting to see how things pan out for PROPE. It has been difficult to get excited about Sonic Team for some time now, and many of Naka's fans will be hoping that the creative juices are flowing once again within the legendary games icon. In the meantime it's a perfect opportunity to have a look back at the highs and lows of Sonic Team, and to find out how things ended this way.

The 15 strong group that was to become Sonic Team all those years ago featured an astonishing amount of talent. First among them being rising star and company golden boy Yuji Naka.

Naka had worked at Sega since the mid-Eighties, taking his bow with the simplistic *Girls Garden* on Sega's SG-1000 machine, and working on some impressive arcade conversions for both the Master System and Mega Drive, such as *OutRun* and *Ghouls 'N Ghosts*. A keen programmer since his youth, it was noted that he had an almost obsessive need for perfection, and an eye for detail that set him apart from his colleagues. This was despite the fact that he quit formal education to pursue his dream in the world of computing, something that led rival company Namco to turn him down for a job due to a lack of a college degree. In 1988, his burgeoning talents took him to the recently created AM8 division, which was fronted by future Sega Executive Vice President Shinobu Toyoda. Naka's time spent there gave him the opportunity to brush shoulders with existing talent and other emerging young bucks, such as Naoto Ohshima, with whom he worked with on *Phantasy Star II*, and Hirokazu Yasuhara, whose flair for level design would eventually make the *Sonic* concept a reality. It is not necessary for us to discuss in any further detail the creation of *Sonic The Hedgehog*; this has been looked at elsewhere and in far more depth.

When several million Genesis consoles had been knocked out to the States, giving Sega the sort of business it craved, Sonic Team should have gone from strength to strength. This was not to be the case

SONIC TEAM

LICENSED TO HELL

Sonic Team not only created one of the most recognisable icons in gaming history, it also created a media and merchandise frenzy. Everyone wanted a piece of the *Hedgehog* pie – standard items such as plush toys, lunchboxes and LCD games were churned out, whilst in Japan, *Sonic* was licensed to children's' hydraulic amusement rides, such as the tremendously named Waku Waku Sonic Patrol Car. In addition to levering more pocket money away from kids, there was also a plethora of animated television shows of varying quality, ranging from the slapstick *Adventures Of Sonic The Hedgehog* to the moody, manga-influenced *Sonic X*. Still on the box today and reportedly created with the advice of Sonic Team themselves, it features a wisecracking, attitude-packed Hedgehog doing battle with Dr Eggman, giant mecha, and the bizarrely named Dark Oak, who sounds more like a real ale than a worthy adversary for Sonic.

however. Fed up with Sega's pay policy, which favoured seniority over creative endeavour, Naka upped sticks along with Yasuhara. It didn't take long, however, before the newly appointed head of Sega's developmental operations in the US contacted Naka to come and join him in sunny California. Mark Cerny was a long established name in the business, and had created trackball-tastic arcade puzzler *Marble Madness*, amongst others.

A friend and acquaintance of Naka-san, he recognised the talent going begging and promptly requested his involvement with his Sega Technical Institute. Conveniently, Yasuhara happened to be in the US at the same time, so the three put their heads together to work on a handful of *Sonic* sequels, culminating in 1994 with the impressive *Sonic & Knuckles*, which used innovative 'lock on' technology, with players able to link other *Sonic* games to the *Sonic & Knuckles* cartridge to unlock exclusive content.

Seven *Sonic* titles had been either created or supervised by members of the temporarily disbanded Sonic Team before Naka-san was tempted back to Japan in 1994 with an offer of a role as producer. This move reunited the original team for the first time in over three years, with the fertile imaginations of Ohshima and Naka brainstorming once again for original ideas. Yasuhara quit shortly after the release of *Sonic & Knuckles*, citing an argumentative relationship with Naka. He went on to assist in the creation of other non-Sonic Team titles for Sega of America, but had left Sega for good by 2002. Any bad blood is long forgotten in Naka's eyes, acknowledging the debt owed to his former workmate: "Hirokazu Yasuhara is a wonderfully capable and creative person and I truly admire his work. Even now, we call the enemy layout of the traditional *Sonic* "the Yasuhara Setting"." Whether Yasuhara-san ever scales similar heights to his early design masterworks remains to be seen. He was last known to have been involved with the *Jak* series of games for the PlayStation 2. Overkill or not, *Sonic* had been incredibly popular and for the most part critically lauded, but now was clearly time for some new gaming concepts and franchises. One only has to investigate the slew of Game Gear and 8-bit *Sonic* spin-offs to see why. As Naka and his team beavered away on what were to become some of the finest titles ever released under the Sega banner, their much-loved franchise was dished out to other developers to tinker with. The likes of UK-based Traveller's Tales attempted to freshen up the adventures of Mr Hedgehog and co, however the games that followed were average at best, perhaps peaking with the enjoyable 'racing' title, *Sonic R* (which Yasuhara-san had a hand in). This period is now looked back upon as being a turbulent chapter in Sega's history, as it attempted to up the ante and gain a bigger share of the market by releasing constant hardware upgrades in quick succession. The Mega Drive was followed by the Mega CD, each redesigned along the way. Next came the 32X, a mushroom-like device with increased power but a tiny catalogue

> "HIROKAZU YASUHARA IS A WONDERFULLY CAPABLE AND CREATIVE PERSON AND I ADMIRE HIS WORK. EVEN NOW, WE CALL THE ENEMY LAYOUT OF THE TRADITIONAL SONIC "THE YASUHARA SETTING""
>
> YUJI NAKA



» *NiGHTS* reborn on PS2 via the EyeToy. But fans are rabid for a true sequel



» Sonic Team gave Saturn gamers the bestest Xmas ever



» Japanese kids have it so much better. Seen one of these outside Netto lately?

of titles that further added to the pile of gaming kit under your television. Don't forget to get the kids a Sega Pico, aimed at the two-to-seven-year-old market. A portable Mega Drive even turned up in the form of the Nomad, before the Saturn was announced to much cynicism.

Despite the pessimism that surrounded it, the Saturn looked like it was a pretty handy piece of kit. Gamers in Japan slavered over the prospect of *Virtua Fighter* in their own homes. And as such, much attention was placed upon what Naka and his cohorts were up to on Sega's new console. Could they deliver? The answer was a resounding yes.

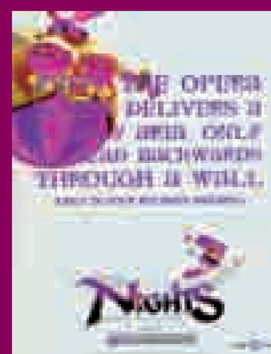
"These titles were initially created with caution. It was seen as too delicate to create a sequel" Yuji Naka, answers when quizzed as to why we have yet to see sequels to *NiGHTS Into Dreams* or *Burning Rangers*, the fruits of Sonic Team's labour between the conception, birth, and untimely death of the Sega Saturn. The former in particular showed the developers' flair for innovation, as it introduced what is generally believed to be the first analogue pad for a home console. Considered by some to be a work of art which transcends videogaming, *NiGHTS* is a spellbinding experience, but did not shift Saturn units in the same way that *Sonic* shifted 16-bit hardware, as the lure of PlayStation and, to a lesser extent, *Mario 64*, meant that Sega was third place. The Saturn was all but finished in the West by the time the criminally overlooked *Burning Rangers* received its unlikely PAL release, as Sega concentrated on the development of its new projects, one which promised futuristic, 128-bit technology, and the exciting prospect of online gaming.

The Dreamcast launched in Japan in 1998, and it did not take long before Sonic Team decided to resurrect its most famous creation. At the time, the Dreamcast was easily the most powerful machine on the market. Sega's Naomi arcade hardware could be almost perfectly emulated using the console, and graphically, in the right hands, it was capable of the sort of quality that could only be achieved on a powerful PC. Yasuhara's replacement Takashi Iizuka had for a long time wanted to create a Sonic RPG, and finally, Sega had a machine that was capable of doing justice to his vision. Thus, *Sonic Adventure* was born, and released to much excitement from those who witnessed the speed, fluidity and graphical tour de force in action. The spiny one's initial appearance on this futuristic, 'next-gen' media has its share of detractors, but still looks luscious and plays extremely well. Designer Yuji Uekawa gave the characters a 'cool', stylised feel, whilst axe-meister and resident music guru Jun Senoue laid down the licks to give the series a distinctly 'rock' flavour. *Flickies' Island* this wasn't. There have been numerous *3D Sonic* titles since, including the sequel, yet none have achieved the 'wow' factor of the original *Sonic Adventure*.

The completion of *Sonic Adventure* saw big changes in the company. Twelve members of the team moved to the US and established the San Francisco-based Sonic Team USA. As with any shake-up in a large firm, there were detractors. Shortly after Sonic Team USA had opened its account with the rushed, critically panned, glitch-filled *Sonic Adventure 2*, some big names, including Youji Ishii and Ohshima-san, left to form a new company, christened Artoon. The new venture had a vast talent resource of ex-Sonic Team staff to draw upon, but strangely has worked on little ever since. Artoon has so far flopped with the commercially and critically unsuccessful *Blinx* franchise, the lukewarm Game Boy Advance release *Pinobee No Daibouken*, and the poorly-received *Yoshi's Universal Gravitation* for the GBA. It's hard to believe that these titles were created by the man whose Midas touch helped design or direct *Burning Rangers*, *Sonic CD* and *NiGHTS*. It is hoped that the forthcoming *Yoshi's Island 2* will see a change in fortunes. Naka-san revealed to us the impact of Ohshima's departure and his ongoing influence on where the company sits today: "I'm sorry to say that we lost a main member of Sonic Team when Ohshima-san decided to leave, but we continue to create products that use his original ideas."

With Naka-san thankfully still on board, Sonic Team went on to finally

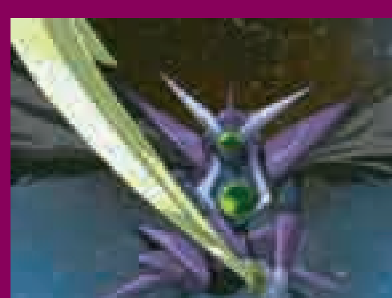
CONSIDERED BY SOME TO BE A WORK OF ART WHICH TRANSCENDS VIDEOGAMING, NIGHTS INTO DREAMS IS A TRULY SPELLBINDING EXPERIENCE, BUT DID NOT SHIFT THE SATURN



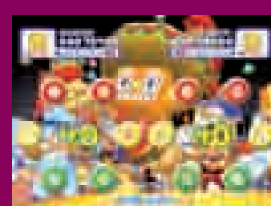
» *NiGHTS*: even the adverts had a dream-like mystique about them



» *Sonic X* as kids see him on telly through their E-numbers haze



» Dark Oak from Sonic X. Best served chilled…



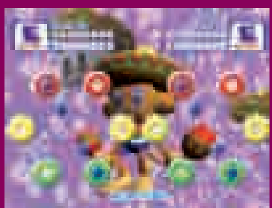
FINEST HOUR

Samba De Amigo (Japanese arcades 1999, Dreamcast 2000)

A monkey named Amigo implores you to stand bow-legged in front of your telly, frantically gyrating, with maracas all over the shop. Add psychedelic graphics, and the only recorded case of the 'Macarena' appearing cool and acceptable; this rhythm action gem was a masterstroke and a real piece of gaming history.

SONIC TEAM





» The sombre scene that meets failure to get one's 'groove' on

achieve success in the arcade market after previous non-starters or relative failures to establish *Sonic* as a coin-op player. In a big financial gamble on the bemani fever gripping Japan, Sega released the incredibly entertaining *Samba De Amigo* in 1999. Although a rhythm action game in the traditional sense, *Samba* was set apart by sharp, colourful graphics, ridiculously daft music tracks, and the genius addition of the maracas peripheral as players shake along to Uekawa-san's smiling, simian creation. The title was converted impeccably to the Dreamcast, and is another Sonic Team milestone of innovation and supreme game design.

"*ChuChu Rocket* was positioned as an important title for Sonic Team and was one of the main initiatives in our effort toward online gaming," reveals Naka when we question him about Sonic Team's involvement with creating online games for the Dreamcast. If *ChuChu Rocket* dipped a toe tentatively into the waters of online gaming, Naka chose to dive in when he dragged *Phantasy Star* kicking and screaming into the new millennium in it's Online guise. With a



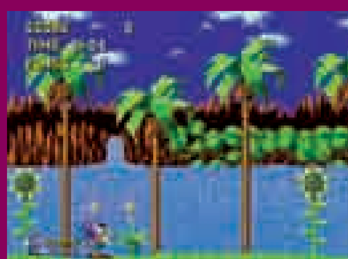
» *Phantasy Star Online*; superb online adventure, sadly ruined by cheaters

GAMES REVIEWS



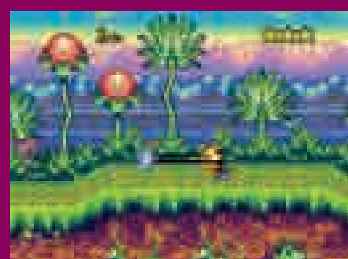
PHANTASY STAR
1987/92 SONIC TEAM

» Created whilst still under the AM8 banner the original *Phantasy Star* contained some fresh features that were stunning at the time, such as pseudo-3D, maze-like dungeons that could be explored in real time, and a battery backed cartridge to save your game position. Kicking off the now wildly popular franchise, this is a difficult yet rewarding experience, which stands up reasonably well today.
80%



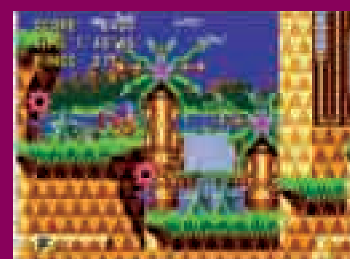
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG
1991 SONIC TEAM

» AM8 hit the jackpot with its first *Sonic* game, shifting Mega Drive bundles hand over fist, and combining an astonishing sense of speed with level design that felt as fresh as a daisy. With day-glo graphics to die for and a musical score by an actual J-pop band, it was simple for beginners to thrash through, but with the now standard Chaos Emerald 'secret' element, harboured real depth. A true classic.
90%



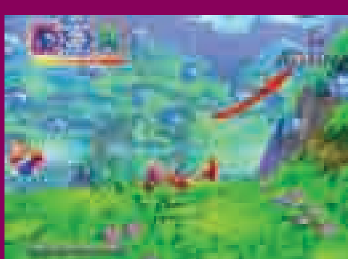
RISTAR
1995 SONIC TEAM

» Were it not for the arrival of 32-bit technology and Sega's own hardware-release overkill, *Ristar* could have attained a status similar to that of his spiny stablemate. *Ristar* uses his extendable arms to move around and pick up objects, mechanics Yuji Naka had originally intended Sonic would use, before speed became first priority. A superb game that should have fared much better, but thankfully easy and cheap to pick up. **85%**



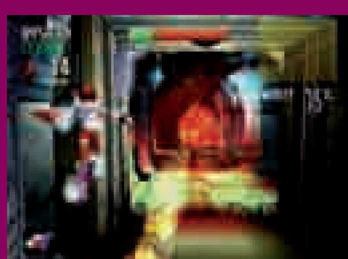
SONIC CD
1993 SONIC TEAM

» Considered by most long term fans to be the best in the series, *Sonic CD* was handled by Naoto Ohshima after Yuji Naka had hopped across the Pacific to the US. Superb graphics, a mind-bending time travel element to the gameplay, and a cracking soundtrack (in Japan, anyway), devoted fans could be seen weeping tears of joy in the streets when this was featured on the recent *Sonic Gems* collection.
94%



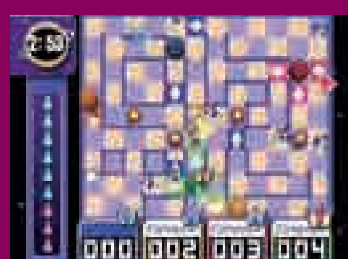
NIGHTS INTO DREAMS
1996 SONIC TEAM

» With evocative themes of nightmares, dreams and human personalities, this was no ordinary gaming experience. Taking control of one of two children and ultimately the enigmatic NiGHTS himself, the analogue stick is used to guide your avatar fluidly around a wonderfully rendered 2D/3D dreamscape, as a sophisticated scoring system and remarkable, evolving musical score envelop you along the way. **95%**



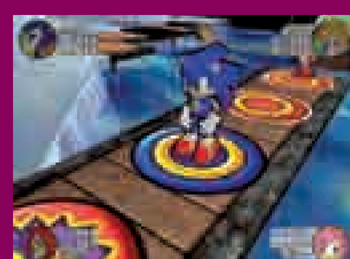
BURNING RANGERS
1998 SONIC TEAM

» The death throes of the Saturn gave us some great titles, as developers squeezed miracles out of the hardware. Sonic Team really hit the spot with this rip-roaring 3D fire fighting romp. With manga stylings and cutscenes, commendable replay value and a mental plot, this is a grade-A platform actioner. Like many Sonic Team classics, fans have demanded a sequel ever since, to no avail. A superb title that still fetches a fair price on eBay. **90%**



CHUCHU ROCKET!
1999/2000/2001 SONIC TEAM

» With a simple premise (cat and mouse board game puzzle – with rockets!!) and addictive gameplay, Sonic Team created a multi-player experience with online functionality, now recognised as being the first commercially successful console release that could be played across the interweb. Later given away free to lure DC gamers online, the frantic guide-mice-into-rockets brainteaser still delights today. **89%**



SONIC SHUFFLE
2000 SONIC TEAM

» In a move to capitalise on the popularity of Nintendo's highly entertaining *Mario Party* series, Sonic Team jumped into bed with the same co-developer and produced an underwhelming board game-style party experience. With confusing mini-games more often than not left to chance rather than skill, unacceptable loading times and blatantly cheating computer-controlled characters, this was poor and a low point for the company. **55%**



""[SONIC TEAM'S] APPROACH WAS ALWAYS TO CREATE STRATEGIC TITLE CONCEPTS, WHICH INCLUDED THE HARDWARE; WE DO SOMEWHAT MISS THE IDEA OF BEING ABLE TO ADDRESS THESE CONSTANT CHALLENGES"

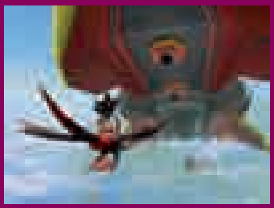
YUJI NAKA

built-in modem to play with, a linear, *Final Fantasy* style RPG would have been somewhat un-ambitious given the power coursing through the Dreamcast's innards. Naka confirms this: "It was planned originally to be an online title and we're very pleased with the results." Although the Dreamcast was usurped with clinical efficiency by the PS2, *Phantasy Star Online* was wildly popular, spawning a second Dreamcast incarnation, and going on to be one of the biggest selling titles for the console. Unfortunately this was to be the last time that Sonic Team would work with a Sega machine, as the Dreamcast was discontinued, after little more than three years, in 2001. Some incredible games were developed by Sonic Team in full, 128-bit glory. We asked Naka how the failure and withdrawal of the machine affected him and the team. In keeping with the general tone of his interview, his answer is somewhat brief and impenetrable. Scratch beneath the surface, however, and it belies a real sadness given Sega's move to concentrate on software and developing games: "Our approach was always to create strategic title concepts, which included the hardware. We do somewhat miss the idea of being able to address these constant challenges."

In 2000, Sega took the decision to split the myriad AM divisions away from the main company to form several subsidiaries, with Sonic Team being renamed SONICTEAM Ltd. Given Sega's bleak financial situation, many of the smaller subsidiaries had to fold or merge with others in order to survive. SONICTEAM, who were financially solvent, absorbed United Game Artists (AM9) in 2003, a division who had created highly original and critically acclaimed fare such as *Rez* and *Space Channel 5*.

The period from the death of the Dreamcast until the present day has been disappointing for fans. Little appeared in the way of original Sonic Team content, with GBA and multi-format ports of earlier *Sonic* games being the order of the day. When a 'new' concept did arrive, it was a remake of the 15-year old Compile puzzler, *Puyo Puyo*, or the good looking but mediocre *Billy Hatcher & The Giant Egg*. In 2004, Sammy bought a controlling interest in Sega to form the Sega Sammy Corporation. This was the catalyst for SONICTEAM Ltd being re-integrated into the main company, with its original name intact. Sonic Team USA, fronted by Iizuka-san, became Sega Studios USA.

Sonic Team now exists in name only, after a glorious run of success, certainly from '91 to 2000. Few companies can claim to have released as many triple-A titles over such a lengthy period. All is not lost, however. PROPE is closely connected to and part-owned by Sega. It is hoped that some of the creative genius displayed by Naka and his team pre-2000 will be given free reign now he is effectively working on his own. Chances are we won't see another *Shadow The Hedgehog* with Naka's name connected to it.



AVOID LIKE THE PLAGUE

Shadow The Hedgehog (Multi, 2005)

Encapsulating the poor recent output of the company, *Shadow* eschews the purity and fun of the early Sonic Team titles in favour of guns and misfiring Noughties attitude, in a shocker that features awful level design, poor controls and a woefully bad camera. The anti-*Sonic* game in every respect.

PETITION TIME

NiGHTS Into Dreams is one of Sega's most beloved games and you only have to go online to see how much demand there is for a sequel.

Websites such as www.petitiononline.com feature several fights for the cause, from the inane premise of demanding Sega to produce a sequel on the Dreamcast, to the worthy shout of a DS or for some stylus-led action. When quizzed on any future developments on this front, Naka is not very forthcoming; "I'll leave that up to your imagination." Next-gen emulation may be the most hopeful means of enjoying these games again and, with the impending arrival of the Wii download service there are many more titles that deserve to become more accessible to today's retro-hungry gamer. Before his departure Naka advised us that, "Sega will start by providing from the Mega Drive generation". Let's hope the Saturn is next to receive some emulation love. We'd be first to cover it.





» A superb puzzler that introduced many Dreamcast owners to the joys of online play. Also received a great GBA adaptation



» Quite possibly the greatest *Sonic the Hedgehog* game ever



» The finest *Sonic* game of them all, perhaps? Cool box, anyhow

INCREDIBLE INNOVATION » SCARY END OF LEVEL BADDIES » FINDING HIDDEN TREASURE » BEAT THAT GAME

MAGIC MOMENTS

Sometimes you'll play a game and certain parts of it will stay in your mind forever.
Join us as we slip on our rose-tinted spectacles and look back at some of the greatest videogame moments of all time

WARRIOR BLADE RASTAN SAGA III

» **SYSTEM:** ARCADE » **RELEASED:** 1991 » **PUBLISHER:** TAITO » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE



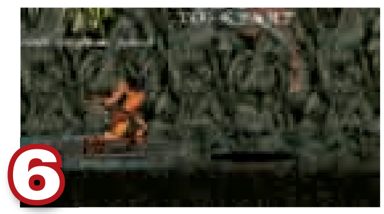
» If I don't see it, it's not happening



» Hay for the horse bar-keep, for tonight I ride



» Stunt doubles are for wimps, get out of here



» The gaping jaws of oblivion

Magic Moments sometimes come from the most unlikely of places. Take *Warrior Blade* for example. Here was a third instalment of a franchise that many felt peaked with the original game, and yet, it's full of classic gaming moments. Star bound in its aspiration; only occasionally does it break free from gravity and shine. But when it shines it's very bright indeed.

Warrior Blade was developed for the Taito widescreen cabinet that housed Darius; working to the systems strengths the designers worked hard to create a cinematic and epic feel to the game, and as such introduce us to a new concept for videogames that surprisingly hasn't been often repeated: The Playable Intro. The game is split into four areas each with its own playable introduction. Wherein fantasy imagery awaits turned up to eleven with incredible sounds and a narration that is fearful for our warriors' well being.

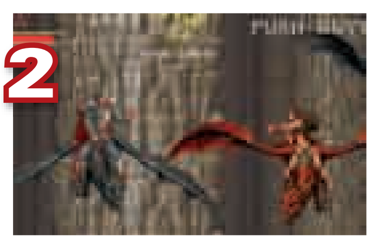
The first level, set atop a cliff is arrived at via Dragonback. Riding a beautifully realised Dragon up a ravine into the clouds, Dragon Riders swarm and attack from all directions with a myriad of arms. Keeping the dragon sky-bound and the hero safe takes some deft manoeuvring of the joystick, the play area narrowed by the ravine is tight and the Dragon's flight is relentless; all the while you find yourself wondering how such beautiful creatures are destined to die at the end of your sword, a wonderful paradox considering the game at large is a slash-'em-up. The Dragon Rider numbers swell, and as the top looms a crescendo of gore passes as the Dragon gracefully lands.

After completing the cliff top you need to get back down, no dragon this time but another playable intro. This time Rastan jumps down a cliff like the true hero he is. Landing on a steep precipice an unstoppable slide begins. Gathering pace with the descent our hero starts a landslide, jumping precarious ridges and outcrops, avoiding rocks and being attacked by armed dinosaurs, this isn't for the faint hearted. Focussing on clearing the ridges and avoiding the rocks it soon becomes apparent that the dinosaurs are becoming an army; timed jumps and aerial attacks are the only safe way to take them down. Eventually the rock face evens out hurling Rastan headlong into a swathe of enemies ripe for the slaughter.

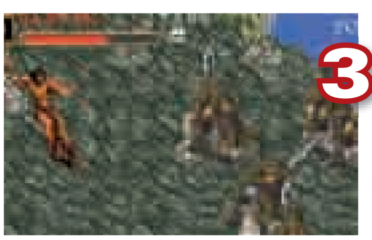
Beyond the Castle, Rastan is told that he needs to go to the Harbour Town, passing through the Horse man's forest. The weakest of the playable intros is also the prettiest, and sees Rastan on horse back, travelling left to right. Rastan fights the pursuing riders and their mounts; jumping obstacles along the way, a simple jump and slash routine takes our hero unscathed through the forest onto a Harbour Town.

Beyond the Harbour Town is a ship; beyond the ship lies another playable intro that takes Rastan across the River of Dead Souls onto Forgotten Swamp. This is the most violent of all the intros; floating on a raft Rastan is pursued by all the foes that the game has so far offered, plus deadly River creatures that lurk just beneath the surface and strike at random. Kill quick or be dead is the creed to navigate the River; dispatch the enemies as soon as they appear and use the health depleting magic attacks on the swamp creatures. Eventually the raft sinks and Rastan is left knee-high in swamp juice to fight the ferocious end of level boss.

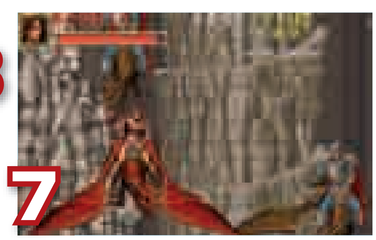
Unfortunately for *Warrior Blade* the levels that made the bulk of the game became distractions between the fantastic intro sequences and as a whole the game couldn't deliver the high standard set by them and subsequently flopped upon release. That, some may say is the great thing about retro gaming, we can ignore the lacklustre and revel in the inspiration and wild abandon of design, and reflect only on the magic moments that a game gave us. *Warrior Blade* for all it's fault was magic in places.



» The dragon ride is a glorious moment; what a shame then that it doesn't last



» Steep Slope Sliders!



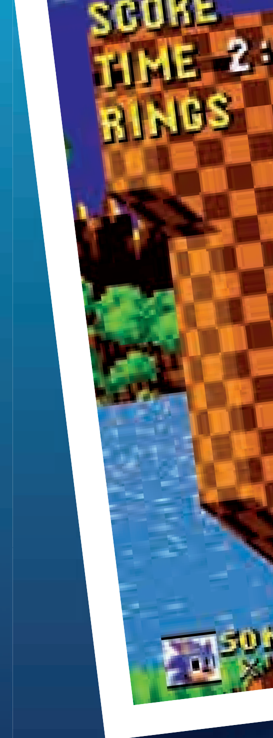
» The only way is up



» I'm so going to win this

eMag





SUPER SONIC

IN THE NINETIES, THERE WAS A GAMING ICON THAT MADE SEGA A HOUSEHOLD NAME. THAT CHARACTER WAS SONIC THE HEDGEHOG. NOW 15 YEARS YOUNG, KIM WILD TAKES A LOOK AT THE HEDGEHOG'S LEGACY.

When Sonic first hit the Mega Drive in 1991, he was an unknown entity. What made him stand out was his incredible speed. His success was ensured with *Sonic 2*, but branching off into the world of karting, racing, pinball and board games didn't always work as intended and the 3D versions have recieved mixed reactions.

Yet despite some dubious games, Sonic remains a popular icon. Yuji Naka thinks his image plays a key part. "I think it's his characteristics of speed and coolness that make him as popular now as in the past," he explains. "No other character really has his traits and that's what makes Sonic so special."

As for *Sonic*'s transition from 2D to 3D, Naka still feels that there's no reason why the two styles can't co-exist side by side. "If there is something to gain, there is also going to be something to lose," he cryptically begins. "There are pros and cons to both 2D and 3D. I think it is what kind of enjoyment the player gets from the various forms that actually matters."

Naka was keen to tell us about the new 360 and PS3 title that will be available towards the end of the year. "We're planning to release *Sonic The Hedgehog* for *Sonic*'s 15th anniversary, which has the same name as the first Mega Drive title," he proudly tells us. "Timed with this special occasion of 15 years, and the transition to the new next-generation of consoles, we are trying to create a title with the basis being that *Sonic* is going back to the basics of 'speed' but will still be full of surprises."



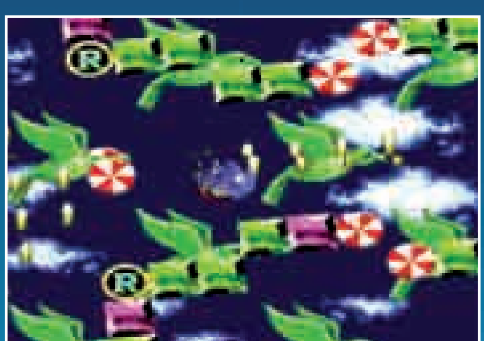


1991
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG (MEGA DRIVE)

The game that kick-started it all and made Sonic the superstar he is today. Here the formula for the series is set: collecting 100 rings rewards Sonic with an extra life (over 50 accesses the Special Stage), finding all the Chaos Emeralds unlocks another ending and the end of each act sees Sonic against either Dr Robotnik or one of his cronies to complete the world. Green Hill Zone is a constant source for familiarity of the series, re-appearing under different guises. Defeating the robot enemies means that the animals are freed from their metallic prisons, creating joy for animal lovers everywhere. The Special Stage of the original game consisted of a frustrating rotating maze where Sonic had to be steered to the chaos emerald.

1991
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG (GAME GEAR/MASTER SYSTEM)

No, you're not hallucinating; *Sonic* on Sega's Game Gear was an entirely different game to the Mega Drive version, which proved disappointing for those expecting a straight conversion. At the time, the visuals were a great showcase for what the handheld could do and although it has been surpassed technically, it still remains very playable today. This time round, the special stage saw Sonic bouncing on springs collecting as many coins and continues as possible in the bumper-filled environment. Chaos emeralds were instead hidden around the levels so searching every nook and cranny was essential to locate them all. A few months later the game was converted to the Master System, which is the same, with some of the sprites made slightly larger for a big screen.



» Sonic the Hedgehog's bonus stage may have looked amazing, but it was a bitch to play through

1992
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2 (GAME GEAR/MASTER SYSTEM)

Contrary to opinion, the Game Gear version of *Sonic 2* came out first although again is a different game to the Mega Drive. Tails made his debut here but unfortunately this was solely in the introduction, which saw Dr Robotnik abducting him, leaving Sonic to come to the rescue. Again, Chaos emeralds had to be found hidden in the levels. A slightly wayward camera made boss battles trickier than they should have been, something remedied in the Master System conversion. No Special Stages.

1992
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2 (MEGA DRIVE)

With *Sonic*'s popularity cemented, Sega went all out on a huge marketing campaign, naming the release date *Sonic 2*sday. This time, Tails known as Miles Prower, accompanied the hedgehog and could be controlled by a second player. The game also included a two-player mode, competitive mode and introduced for the first time seven Chaos Emeralds over the standard six. The Special Stage, which consists of Sonic and Tails racing down a chute collecting rings, is the best of all the games, although Tails does get in the way of the bombs. *Sonic 2* was also the first appearance of Super Sonic. After collecting all of the chaos emeralds, getting 50 rings would enable Sonic to transform into a yellow invincible hedgehog and the rings acted as a timer, only increasing with the collection of additional rings. Interesting fact: foxes in Japanese legend are magical and mystical creatures that sometimes grow two tails.

1993
SONIC CHAOS AKA SONIC & TAILS (GAME GEAR/MASTER SYSTEM)

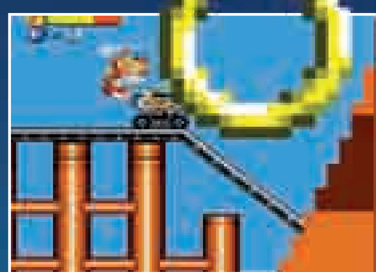
For some reason, the games had their names changed with America and Europe knowing the game as *Sonic Chaos* with Japan calling it *Sonic & Tails*. As a first on the Game Gear/Master System, it was possible to play the game as Sonic or Tails, although with the latter you couldn't collect Chaos emeralds or see the ending. After collecting 100 rings, you were warped to the special stage.



» Sonic takes a rest and decides to bomb around in a minecart. Watch out for those spikes!

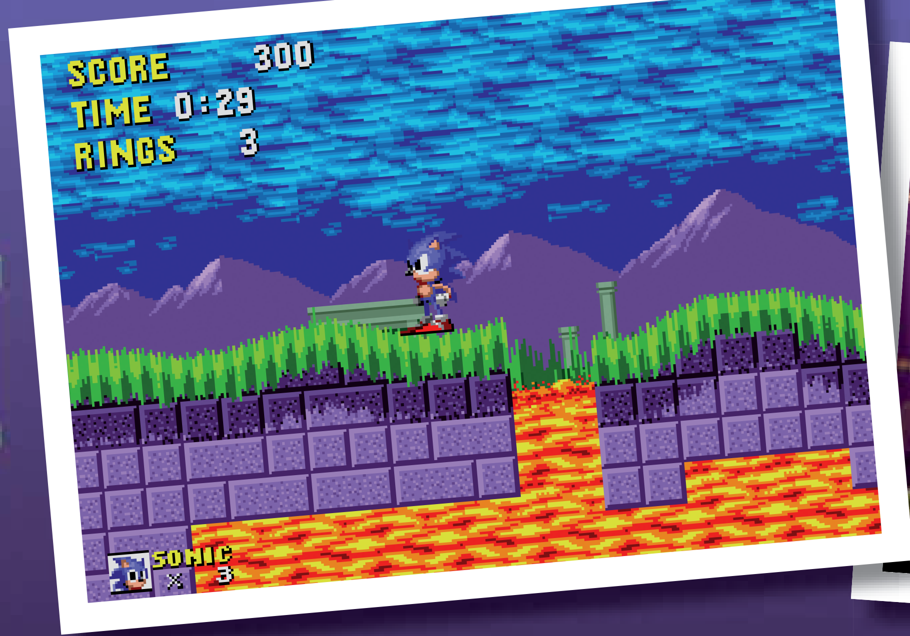


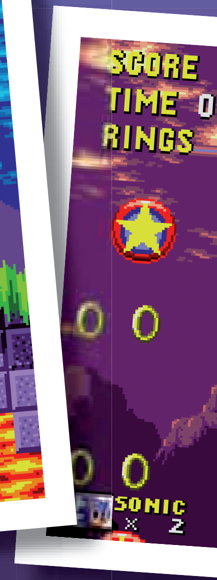
» Sonic yet again shows his trademark impatience if you keep him waiting



» Nope, we don't know what's going on either









» The Master System version of , *Spinball* suffers from poor visibility. Shame

1993
SONIC CD (MEGA CD)

Sonic CD was the only game to be released on Sega's failing add-on yet its impressive size and unique gameplay meant that it still managed to impress the hedgehog's fanbase. For a long time before release, the game was rumoured to be a remake of *Sonic 2* with added animated sequences but this wasn't the case. As a first, the game features an extensive animated introduction showcasing the power of the CD format although the opening tune differs depending on the whether you own the Jap or European version. Sonic has the ability to warp into the past and the future using designated signposts, the state of which will differ depending on whether or not Robotnik's roboticiz2er is destroyed in the past of each act. Several new characters were introduced including Amy Rose, the obsessive pink female hedgehog infatuated with our hero, and Metal Sonic, a metallic robot with the skills that Sonic possesses. It's also the first game to feature multiple endings, with the good ending taking place if all time stones are collected and all the roboticizer's are destroyed. The Special Stage is in complete 3D, the objective being to destroy the alien spaceships within the time limit while running along a track and avoiding the various hazards.

1993
SONIC SPINBALL (MEGA DRIVE/ GAME GEAR)

As a concept this really should have worked, especially after the superb Casino Zone of *Sonic 2* but the controls were not as responsive as they should have been. The Game Gear version was a condensed port of its big brother but the smaller screen meant that it was difficult to see what was going on.



1993
DR ROBOTNIK'S MEAN BEAN MACHINE (MEGA DRIVE/MASTER SYSTEM/GAME GEAR)

If you've ever played this and thought it bore a striking resemblance to the *Puyo Puyo* series then you'd be right; it's the same game repackaged for the Western audience. The aim is to align four beans of the same colour together to make them disappear, creating chains of combos until your opponent's screen (or your own) overflows. The animation style is based on the cartoon series *The Adventures Of Sonic The Hedgehog* back in the Nineties, which is why Dr Robotnik appears to have had a makeover. Luckily, *Puyo Puyo* is a decent game to start with and as a result, *Mean Bean Machine* is as addictive as ever. It's worth noting that the Game Gear version (available on Tec Toy for Master System) is superior due to the inclusion of a puzzle mode.

1994
SONIC DRIFT (GAME GEAR)

Although this game was conceived and released before the SNES's *Super Mario Kart*, the fact that it was only released in Japan and utter tripe meant that very few gamers paid it any real attention. Playable characters include Sonic, Tails, Amy and Dr Eggman himself who all have special abilities on the track when more than two rings are collected. A rather poor game that even the most ardent *Sonic* fan may find hard to enjoy.

1994
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 3 (MEGA DRIVE)

Back to what he does best, *Sonic 3* is a mammoth platform game that first introduces Knuckles, who to





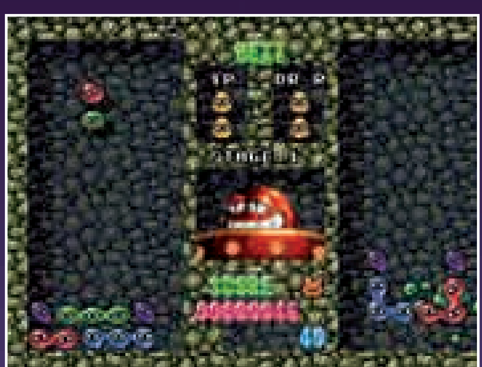




begin with is on Dr Robotnik's team. Although there are only two acts, the levels themselves are larger in scope and include plenty of mini-bosses to ensure that the action stays as fast paced as ever. The Special Stages take on a different guise having you travel along a grid collecting only the blue spheres, with contact with a red sphere throwing Sonic back onto the main level. A strong adaptation of the series that proved that Sonic Team was more than willing to explore new avenues for its cherished mascot.

1994
SONIC & KNUCKLES (MEGA DRIVE)

Essentially more of the same in comparison to *Sonic 3*, this game had the added bonus of Lock-On Technology, enabling gamers to add new features to other *Sonic* titles. Plugging in *Sonic 2* or *3* into the top of the cartridge meant it was possible to play as Knuckles in those games. With *Sonic 3*, it doubled the size of the game by adding seven chaos emeralds, bringing the total to 14. While it's seen by many as Sonic's greatest Mega Drive outing we still prefer the amazing *Sonic 2*.



» It may be *Puyo Puyo* in disguise, it's still great fun

1994
SONIC TRIPLE TROUBLE (GAME GEAR)

The best in the series for the Game Gear, *Sonic Triple Trouble* once again sees Sonic or Tails trying to beat Robotnik at his own game. Ramps, springs, carts and jumps were more prominent than in any other Game Gear/Master System title with varied bosses to tackle. It was the first game on the handheld to see the character Nack the Weasel (also known as Fang) who appears at the end of Special Stages and must be defeated to gain a chaos emerald.

1995
KNUCKLES CHAOTIX (32X)

The concept of team play was introduced here although the game was not favourably received by the public. Characters from the arcade game such as Vector the Crocodile, Charmy the Bee and Espio the Chameleon appeared and each partnership was joined together by a ring. Each character differed in ability: Knuckles could climb walls while Charmy could fly in the air. *Sonic* fans may want to track it down, but it's no traditional *Sonic* title.

1995
TAILS SKY PATROL (GAME GEAR)

Tails gets to star in his first stand-alone title, which was only ever available in Japan at time of release. It's a strange addition to the *Sonic* canon, with Tails carrying a ring across the levels, which has to be used to defeat enemies and progress through the game. Awkward controls and a weird camera angle make it difficult and frustrating to play.

1995
TAILS ADVENTURE (GAME GEAR)

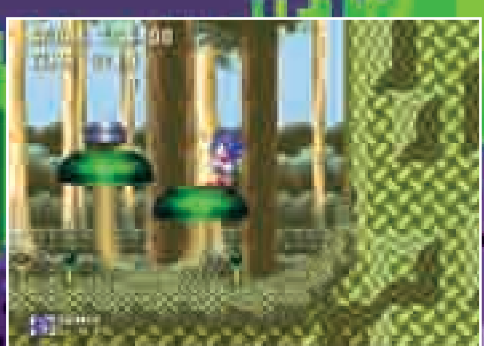
Another variation on the *Sonic* franchise, this one (also featuring Tails) is more of a puzzle game with the emphasis on collecting items. Despite the change in style, it's a remarkably playable title that's becoming increasingly difficult to find at a decent price. Instead of Dr Robotnik, an army of strange looking birds have invaded Tails Holiday Island and set it on fire, leaving it to Tails to rescue his friends.

1995
SONIC LABYRINTH (GAME GEAR)

Sonic returns in yet another twist to the platform formula, this time in the vein of a *Marble Madness* clone. The fight against the time limit means that you constantly have to use Spin Dash to get anywhere, taking care not to go too fast as death lurks around every corner. Not a great game, but it has its moments (plus a great soundtrack).

1995
SONIC DRIFT 2 (GAME GEAR)

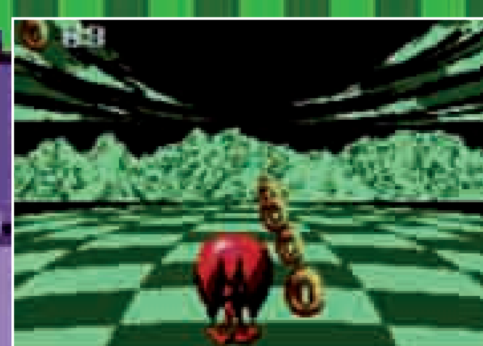
Mario Kart style racing returns but this time round everything has been greatly improved. Better controls, a



» A bit more thought was required to get through the levels



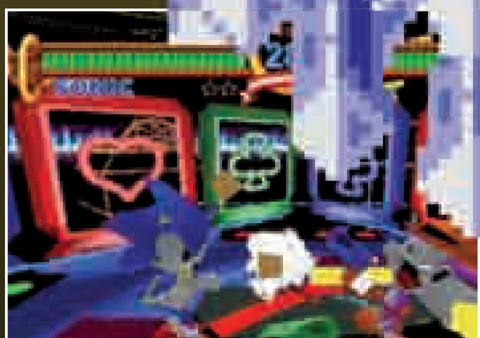
» *Sonic Drift 2* may have been an improvement, but Mario Kart still ruled



» The visuals don't do the game any favours at all

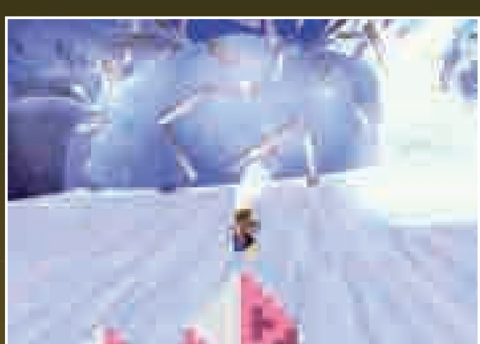
SUPER SONIC





» The arcade version of *Sonic The Fighters* was rarely seen in Europe





» **Above:** Sadly, the only racing game featuring Sonic that gets it right **Below:** Despite the adventure elements, *Sonic Adventure* remains an enjoyable title

more advanced Grand Prix mode and a nifty two-player link-up option make this a worthy game in the series. Hell, we'd take an update of this over *Sonic Riders* any day of the week.

1996
SONIC BLAST/G SONIC (GAME GEAR)

Sonic Blast (*G Sonic* in Japan) is a 2D style game which was let down badly by poor controls and bland level design. It was the first and only Game Gear game to allow you to control Knuckles. In a bid to push the boundaries, all characters have been created with pre-rendered graphics and look appalling – too imposing for the small screen. The special stages were in full 3D and visually impressive for the Game Gear.

1996
SONIC CHAMPIONSHIP/SONIC THE FIGHTERS (ARCADE)

A primitive fighting game in the *Virtua Fighter* mould, this arcade title only appeared in a few European arcades, although *Sonic* devotees can now play it on the *Sonic Gems Collection* that's available for the GameCube and PlayStation2. Its simplicity meant that it never really garnered much of a following outside of native Japan and is best viewed as a curio item only.

1996
SONIC 3D FLICKIES' ISLAND/ SONIC 3D BLAST (MEGA DRIVE/SATURN/PC)

Developed by Traveller's Tales rather than Sonic Team, Flickies' Island stood out by having a 3D overhead perspective. Although the basics of *Sonic* remain, this time round the Flickies (the cute birds in the arcade and Mega Drive title *Flicky*) have been scattered across the levels and have to be rescued. The Saturn and Mega Drive games are similar apart from the former boasting enhanced visuals and a far superior soundtrack.

1997
SONIC R (SATURN/PC)

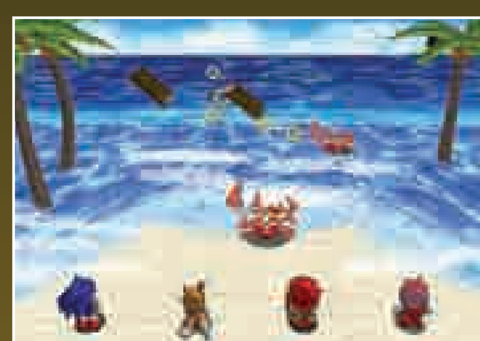
The only racing game that makes the *Sonic* name proud, this effort also came from the heart of Traveller's Tales. Although short, there are six unlockable racers including Doctor Robotnik, Metal Sonic, Tails Doll, Metal Knuckles, Egg Robo and Super Sonic, all of which handle differently. And the soundtrack boasts some of the best music that Richard Jacques has ever composed. If you haven't got a large grin on your face while listening to Can You Feel The Sunshine? you're probably already dead.

1997
SONIC JAM (GAME.COM)

Not to be confused with the compilation of the same name on the Sega Saturn, *Sonic Jam* on the Game.com threw in elements from *Sonic 2* and *3* but was a complete travesty. Monochrome screen aside, speed of gameplay was sluggish, rendering Sonic's speed down to a snail-like crawl. One of the worst *Sonic* games we've ever been unfortunate enough to play.

1998
SONIC ADVENTURE (DREAMCAST)

As the first true 3D title, Dreamcast owners were wowed by the sheer speed and graphical trickery that was contained in a shiny disc. *Sonic Adventure* was released three times in all; the first edition in Japan, the second a limited edition released in selected areas of the US, while the third, *Sonic Adventure International,* was released worldwide. Aside from being able to play the game with each individual character (and collect emblems), a virtual pet Chao was introduced which could be transferred to a Dreamcast VMU card. In 2001, *Sonic Adventure DX* was released: a port of the original for the GameCube including new mission modes, 12 unlockable Game Gear games and the ability to transfer a Chao to the Game Boy Advance; amazingly, the main game was a poor port, meaning that the Dreamcast version is still the one to own.



» Board games and hedgehogs do not mix





» This port of *Sonic Advance* suffers due to the N-gage's narrow screen

1999
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG POCKET ADVENTURE (NEO GEO POCKET COLOR)

A port of *Sonic The Hedgehog 2* minus Tails, this is an excellent conversion and although the levels are visually toned down, everything is intact including the tunnel Special Stage. Features included a picture puzzle section where pieces could be collected across the levels and time trials for each stage. It was possible to link up with another machine for two-player races and was originally intended to make use of the NGPC to Dreamcast cable, but sadly this didn't get implemented in the final version.

2000
SONIC SHUFFLE (DREAMCAST)

A spin-off board game copying the *Mario Party* series, *Sonic Shuffle* was a poor effort that combined copious mini games around the *Sonic* universe. Playing as either Sonic, Tails, Amy or Knuckles (Big the Cat, E-102 Gamma, Super Sonic and a Chao can be unlocked), you must travel around the board and then depending on where you land, collect rings, play a game or battle with the eventual aim to collect as many precious stones as possible. The cel-shaded visuals worked well, but the mini-games weren't much fun to play and the slow movement of other characters dragged playability down considerably.

2001
SONIC ADVENTURE 2 (DREAMCAST)

Even bigger than before, *Sonic Adventure 2* abandoned the exploration elements of the original and stuck to speed, shooting and hunting for emeralds. It was the first game in the series to introduce Hero and Dark sides to play with, the latter allowing you to play as the infamous Shadow the Hedgehog and Eggman. Chao mode was also back with added features. To tie in with *Sonic*'s 10th Anniversary, a special pack was released in Japan including a commemorative book, gold coin and soundtrack. In 2004, the game ported to the GameCube as *Sonic Adventure 2: Battle*, with an enhanced Chao mode and extra multi-player modes.

2002
SONIC ADVANCE (GAME BOY ADVANCE)

The first outing on Nintendo's handheld; *Sonic Advance* is a decent effort although it pales in comparison to the Neo Geo Pocket title. It's certainly a colourful game and is miles better than the more recent 3D efforts, but it still falls short of the original 16-bit classics.

2002
SONIC ADVANCE 2 (GAME BOY ADVANCE)

Much improved over the original, this sequel sees the appearance of new character, Cream the Rabbit, who appears in the storyline of *Sonic Rush* on DS. Special coins have to be collected to activate the Special Stage and although the game doesn't add anything new, all the trademark material is here.

2003
SONIC N (N-GAGE)

This isn't really a new game as it is essentially a port of *Sonic Advance* but we're mentioning it here for completion reasons. Unfortunately, it took away any good aspects by not converting it properly to the smaller screen and omitting multi-player options. Oh and having to play it on a keypad doesn't help matters either. A decent effort, but stick with the original Game Boy Advance version.



» Sonic gets to spin a lot in this world



» New girl Cream gets into as much trouble as Amy

SUPER SONIC

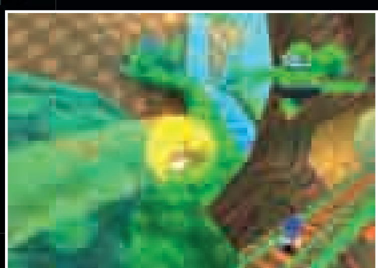




The tag partner system adds a lot of depth and variety to e gameplay



» Sonic taking a rare break before tackling the rest of the level



» The PSP's *Sonic Rivals* already looks great, even with Shadow being in it

2003
SONIC PINBALL PARTY (GAME BOY ADVANCE)

After a failed attempt with *Sonic Spinball*, Sega managed to get the formula right this time with *Pinball Party* on the GBA. Featuring three tables, Sonic, Samba (based on the Dreamcast game) and Nights (focusing on the Saturn original), a certain number of rings have to be collected before Eggman can be taken on and defeated. The Sonic table is based on the zones featured in *Sonic Advance*. A solid game that will please pinball and Sonic fans alike.

2004
SONIC HEROES (GAMECUBE/PS2/XBOX)

Much like *Knuckles Chaotix*, *Sonic Heroes* used a tag-team system between three characters. The three characters between them had the ability of speed, power or flight on their side. Clumsy control and an obstinate camera meant it was a frustrating experience, although not completely without merit.

2004
SONIC ADVANCE 3 (GAME BOY ADVANCE)

Here the partner system returns, but with each character adding and taking away abilities; plenty of combinations need to be used to locate all the secrets. Chaos Emeralds are trickier than ever to collect, with all 70 Chao hidden in the game needing to be found to unlock the keys to the special stages. By far the best *Sonic* title currently available on the GBA.

2004
SONIC BATTLE (GAME BOY ADVANCE)

Another fighting game, this time in the style of *Smash Bros*, only nowhere near as impressive. Horrendous controls, appalling visuals and some questionable collision detection means that *Sonic Battle* is a travesty of a game that should be avoided at all costs.

2006
SHADOW THE HEDGEHOG (GAMECUBE/PS2/XBOX)

Again not really a *Sonic* game but it's officially part of the canon so it's getting included here. Yuji Naka went on the record as saying Sega "wanted Shadow to be a different character to Sonic as it also allows us to expand the possibilities for *Sonic* titles." Despite guns being available, they weren't as prominent as implied but the generic gameplay and uninspiring level design meant that Shadow really was lingering in Sonic's wake.

2006
SONIC RIDERS (GAMECUBE/PS2/XBOX)

To commemorate the 15th Anniversary of our beloved hedgehog, Sonic Team released *Sonic Riders*. Although visually it plays the part and features the frantic speed one



» Explosions are a-plenty with *Shadow*





expects from the series, the controls are poor plus the blur effect while racing at high speed makes it incredibly difficult to enjoy. One for the younger fans only we're afraid.

2006
SONIC RUSH (NDS)

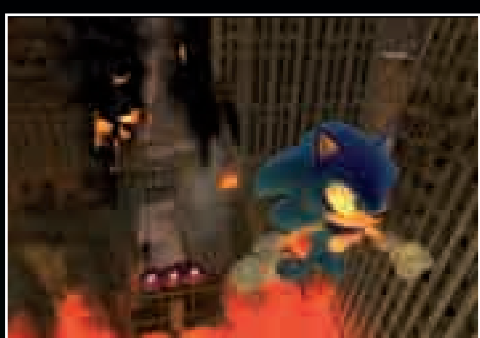
A 2D *Sonic* game that takes advantage of both screens, *Sonic Rush* is a blinding return to form and re-captures the magic of the earlier iterations. *Sonic Rush* introduces a new character called Blaze the cat, who handles in a similar way to Sonic and has a different storyline. Although only the touch screen is used to collect Chaos emeralds, all the classic ramps, springs and loops are back in a superb platform outing.

2006
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG (PS3 XBOX 360)

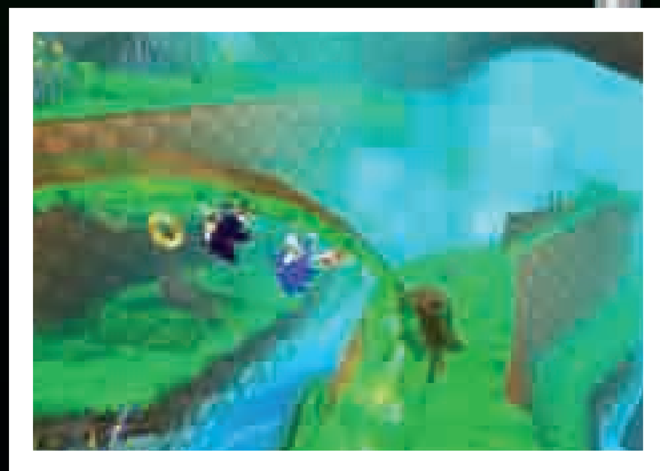
Currently under development for the PS3 and Xbox 360, Sonic is set to re-invent his image. All the usual rings, pinball bumpers, rails and enemies are here, only this time round, two additional hedgehogs are in town: the annoying Shadow, who bizarrely tears around in a jeep and Silver, who amongst other things, uses telekinesis to hover mid-air and can grab far away objects all with the power of his mind. Has a surprising amount of potential.

2006
SONIC RIVALS (PSP)

Those of you who have a PSP and are jealously lusting after *Sonic*'s recent debut on Nintendo's DS can look forward to *Sonic Rivals* later this year. It's a brand new racing platformer that combines the classic 2D gameplay of old with 3D environments. Four different characters can be used with their own storyline and it will be possible to collect trading cards to customise their abilities. This is looking like a mighty fine return to form. We can't wait.



» Will the 360 *Sonic the Hedgehog* be a return to the Sonic of old?

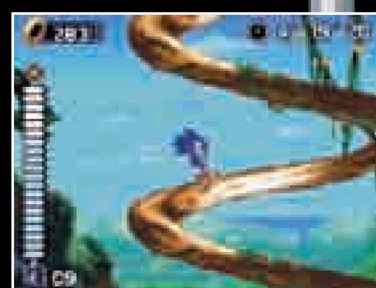


2006
SONIC WILDFIRE (WII)

Hopefully due for release later this year, *Sonic Wildfire* nevertheless looks set to make good use of the Wii's innovative controller. By tilting the controller horizontally, Sonic can be steered left and right to avoid obstacles while moving it forward allows the hedgehog to attack enemies and barriers. A variety of mini-games adapted for the controller are also set to be included.

NOTABLE OMISSIONS

There are some titles that weren't listed in the main article so here goes. Sonic appeared in educational titles including *Sonic Schoolhouse* on PC and on Sega Pico in *Sonic The Hedgehog's Gameworld*. *Sonic Eraser* had a limited release via download with the Mega Drive modem Meganet in Japan. There's also the unreleased *Sonic Xtreme*, well documented in RG Issue 22 and *Sonic Crackers*, a prototype that was supposedly Sonic 4. More information on this can be found at: http://sonicology.fateback.com/beta/crackers/index.html
Oh and there's *SegaSonic*, a cool arcade game that's now extremely hard to track down… but we've run out of space. Bye!



» *Sonic Rush* is a real return to form and plays like a dream



SPIKY HAROLD

HE'S NO SONIC…



- » **PUBLISHER:** FIREBIRD SOFTWARE
- » **RELEASED:** 1986
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SPECTRUM
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1+

HISTORY



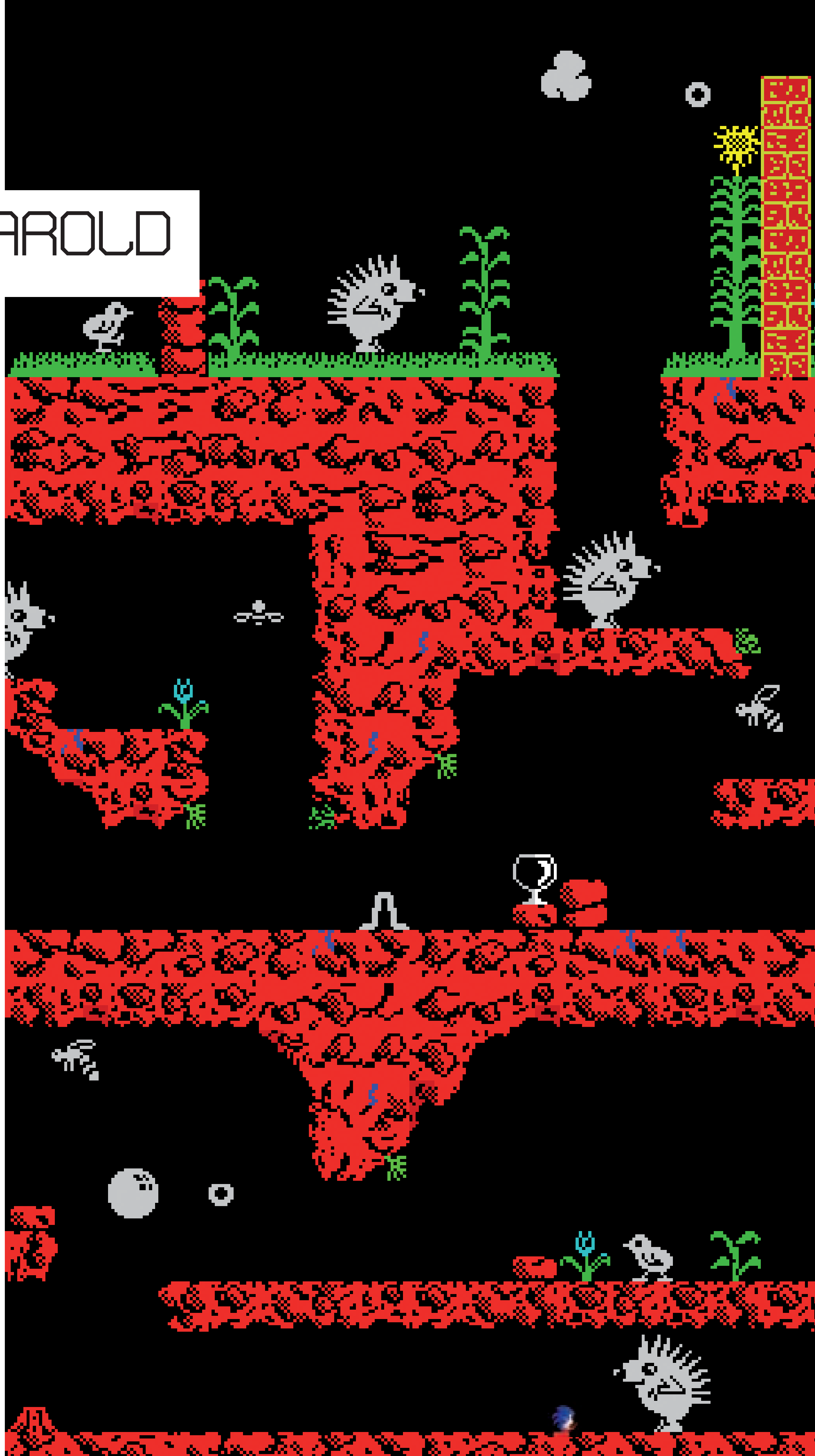
Nostalgia can do funny things to us, especially when it comes to videogames. Take Firebird's *Spiky Harold* for example. When I first encountered the lovable hedgehog in 1986 (a good five years before Sega's blue mascot) he was behaving exactly as any other Erinaceus Europaeus (that's Latin by the way) should be behaving.

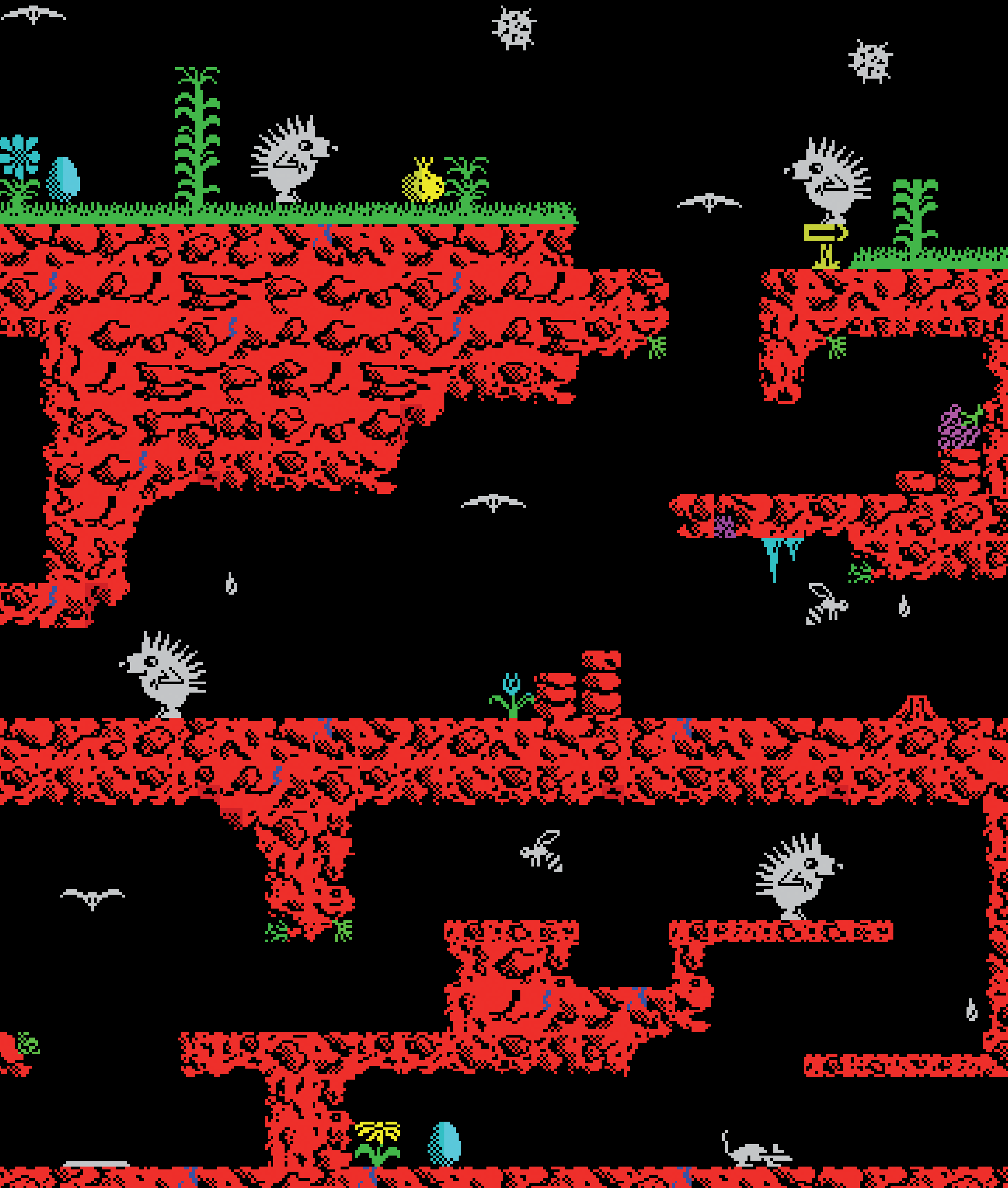
There was no speeding through loop-the-loops, collecting rings and chaos emeralds or wearing red slippers; this was a hedgehog with just one goal – to eat enough food to safely hibernate through the winter. It was a simple premise perfectly befitting a simple game.

Although *Spiky Harold* failed to set the world alight when it was first released I still found it wonderfully endearing to play and lost many hours to the little bugger. As well as collecting various pieces of food, Harold could also pick up coins that would give you extra lives, and wine, which would get poor Harold drunk and reverse your controls. Each screen was filled with a variety of common and not so common garden creatures and required real skill (and a healthy dose of luck) to negotiate – also strangely, Harold was unable to eat the many insects that appeared throughout his adventure. Despite this oddity, *Spiky Harold* was a fun little game and worth returning to. Or so I thought…

I've been playing Firebird's platformer again for the purpose of this feature and sadly, it's bloody awful. The collision detection is woeful, the pinpoint-perfect jumps are frustratingly difficult to perform and it features a typical problem of old games – that I like to call the *Jet Set Willy* syndrome – where you'll constantly re-spawn in the same place and immediately die.

Spiky Harold still retains plenty of charm (the main sprite in particular is one of the cutest 8-bit characters I've ever encountered) but in the cold light of day, he's now beginning to look mighty tired. I wonder if we'll be saying the same thing about the original *Sonic The Hedgehog* in 20 years time?



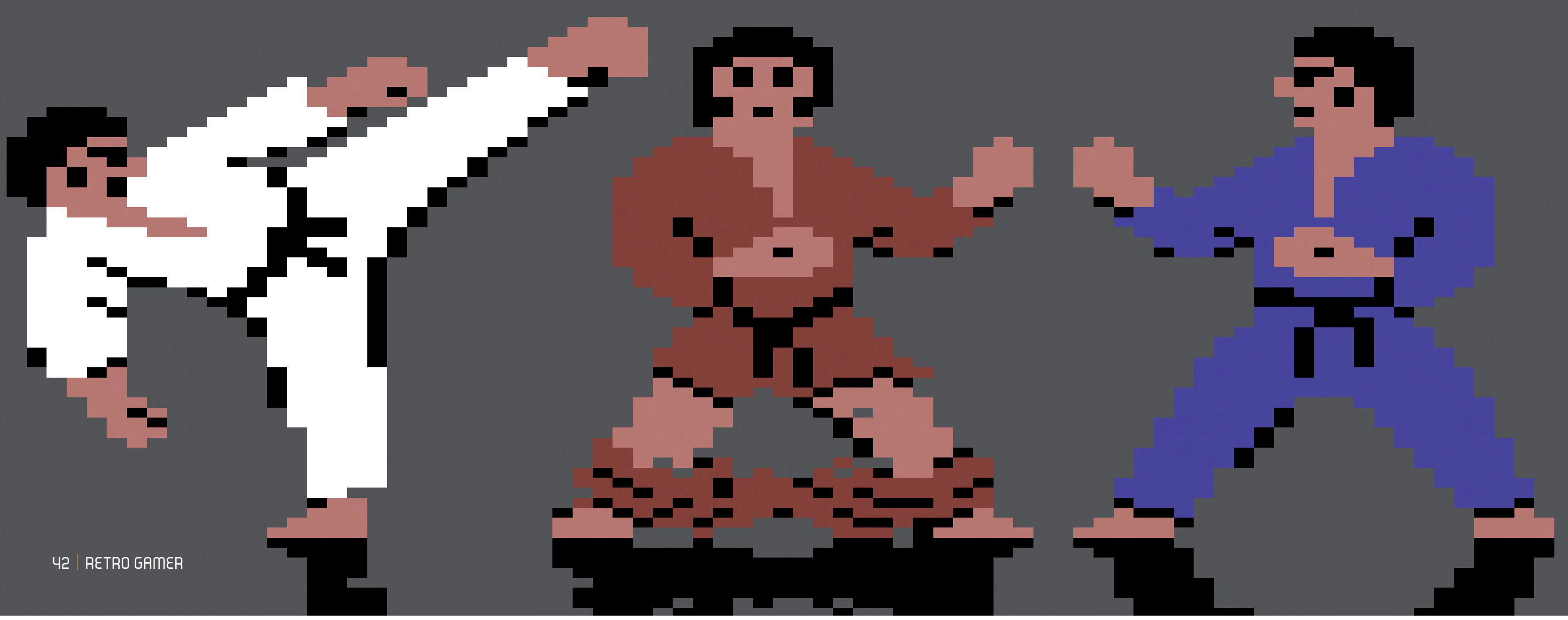


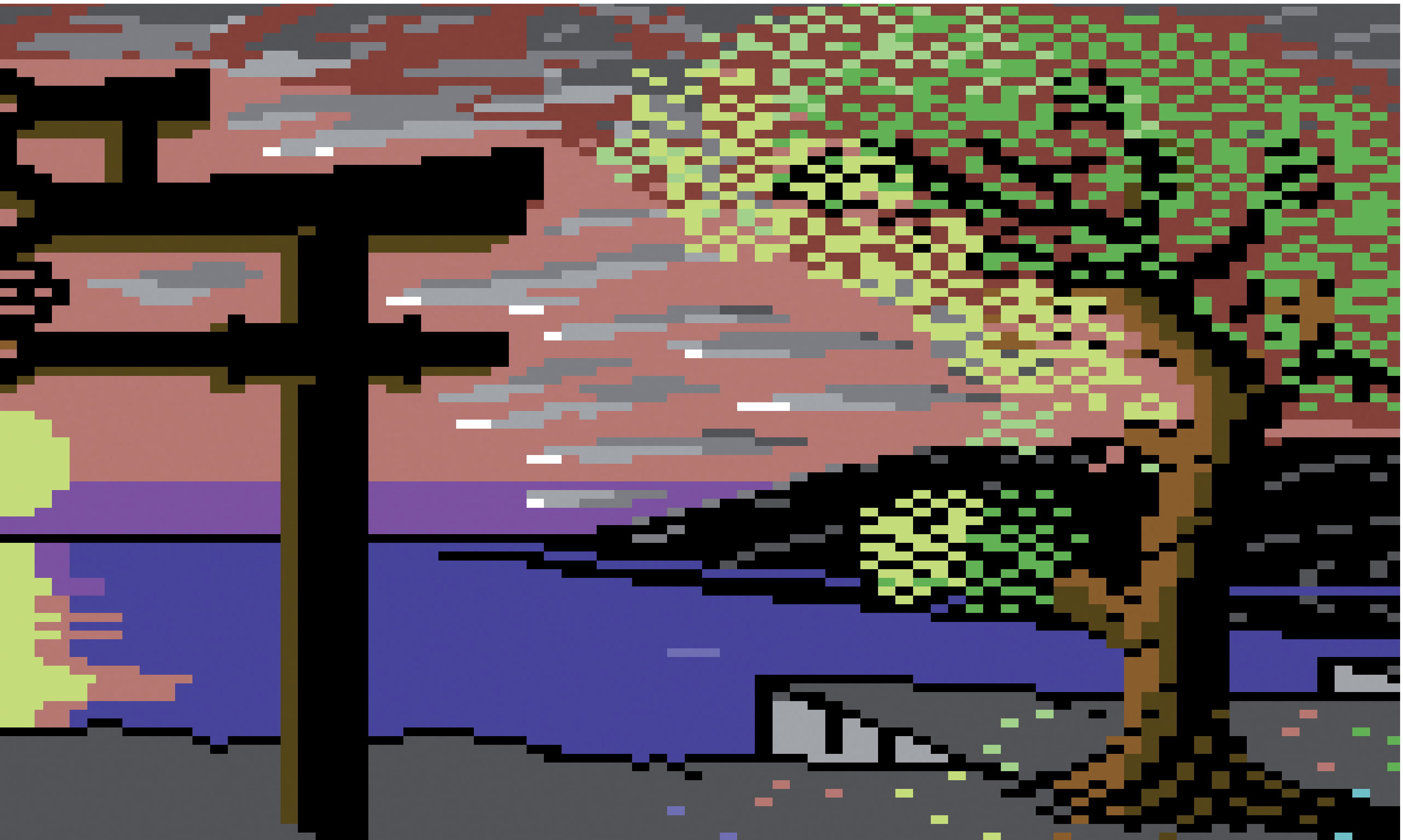


THE MAKING OF...

INTERNATIONAL KARATE AND IK+

To summarise International Karate in a convenient, quirky sound bite would be equivalent to compressing 1000 years of martial arts history into a ten minute Chuck Norris montage, so we're not even going to try. Instead, we asked Archer MacLean to guide us through the remarkable history of his perennial 2D retro-fighter that is now a part of the warrior's heritage.





"I JUST DECIDED TO MAKE IT A THREE PLAYER SIMULTANEOUS GAME… AS SOON AS I HAD THIS IDEA I KNEW IT WAS A GOOD ONE, AND COULDN'T WORK FAST ENOUGH TO MAKE IT HAPPEN" ARCHER MACLEAN

International Karate was born into the golden age of the fighting game, when the one-on-one filled the stale arcade air with the splash of an over-full coin box and the jeers of blood-hungry players. Coin-op cabinets were tested by fire as savage gamers mimicked their on-screen counterparts, assailing joysticks and buttons with the fury that only a beat-'em-up can provoke. Developers were fighting their own battles to be the first to bring this passion to our home systems.

In 1985, System 3 was desperate to save a struggling production it hoped would join the fighting game fray on the software shelves and introduce Archer MacLean to the 8-bit fighting world. He told us how the journey began.

"I was originally asked in about August '85 to just do some C64 graphics routines for a karate game, as the original programmer and artist had walked out on the project. Gossip said he'd apparently not been paid. I took one look at the minimal amount of early Spectrum *IK1* work and thought it was pretty awful, in fact really dire, and had no interest in trying to convert it and improve it. Afterwards we all went to the pub and there was an arcade karate machine in there, and I was more or less asked if I could do something just like it. I hadn't seen it before although it was clear where the Spectrum's game structure had come from. I played it for five minutes and simply thought I could do a much more fluid quality job if I just redid everything myself whilst sticking to a karate type theme of timed bouts of fighting."

These difficulties caused System 3 to falter, and by the time Archer was at the helm, fighting games were causing a sensation on the 8-bit computer game charts, with Melbourne House's *Way Of The Exploding Fist*, firmly in the lead.

"Around the same time, *Fist* came out and was a huge, huge hit and I remember fondly playing it to death over and over again. It was seriously addictive, and I take my hat off to Greg Barnett for making it such an incredible, fun game. I played various others like *Yie Ar Kung Fu*, but *Fist* was the best at that point" Archer explains, happy (and confident) to acknowledge his inspiration.

"I started working on a whole new game structure and adapted it into my proven *Dropzone* game shell. I set about drawing and re-drawing various backdrops and animations some of which I was asked to do, and some of which are unique to the *IK1* versions I wrote. I also wrote various simple tools to allow me to animate frames together and cue sound effects to trigger at exactly the right frame time."

EMPTY HAND OVER FIST

Martial arts are synonymous with speed, control and agility, and any game basing itself around an established fighting system had to encompass those core principles. Most managed to deliver one or two, though all three were hard to find neatly packaged in a single beat-'em-up. Even the hallowed *Karate Champ* caused its share of frustration as the two combatants shuffled sluggishly back and forth while trying to find their fighting distance. *International Karate* suffered no such lethargy.

"The biggest challenge was making the players move and react sensibly, with increasing conviction as the difficulty level increased. Also, I wanted to make the knuckle of a hitter strike the actual nose pixel of the opponent, and none of this *Street Fighter* stuff where you can be miles out and the guy still drops. So I wrote another graphics tool to allow me to quickly set various x/y offset's from each animation frame's corner.

Except for being told to stick to the formula of rounds/points/bonuses etc, the *International Karate* content was created



» Not only did the Spectrum version of *International Karate* look a lot worse, it played like hell

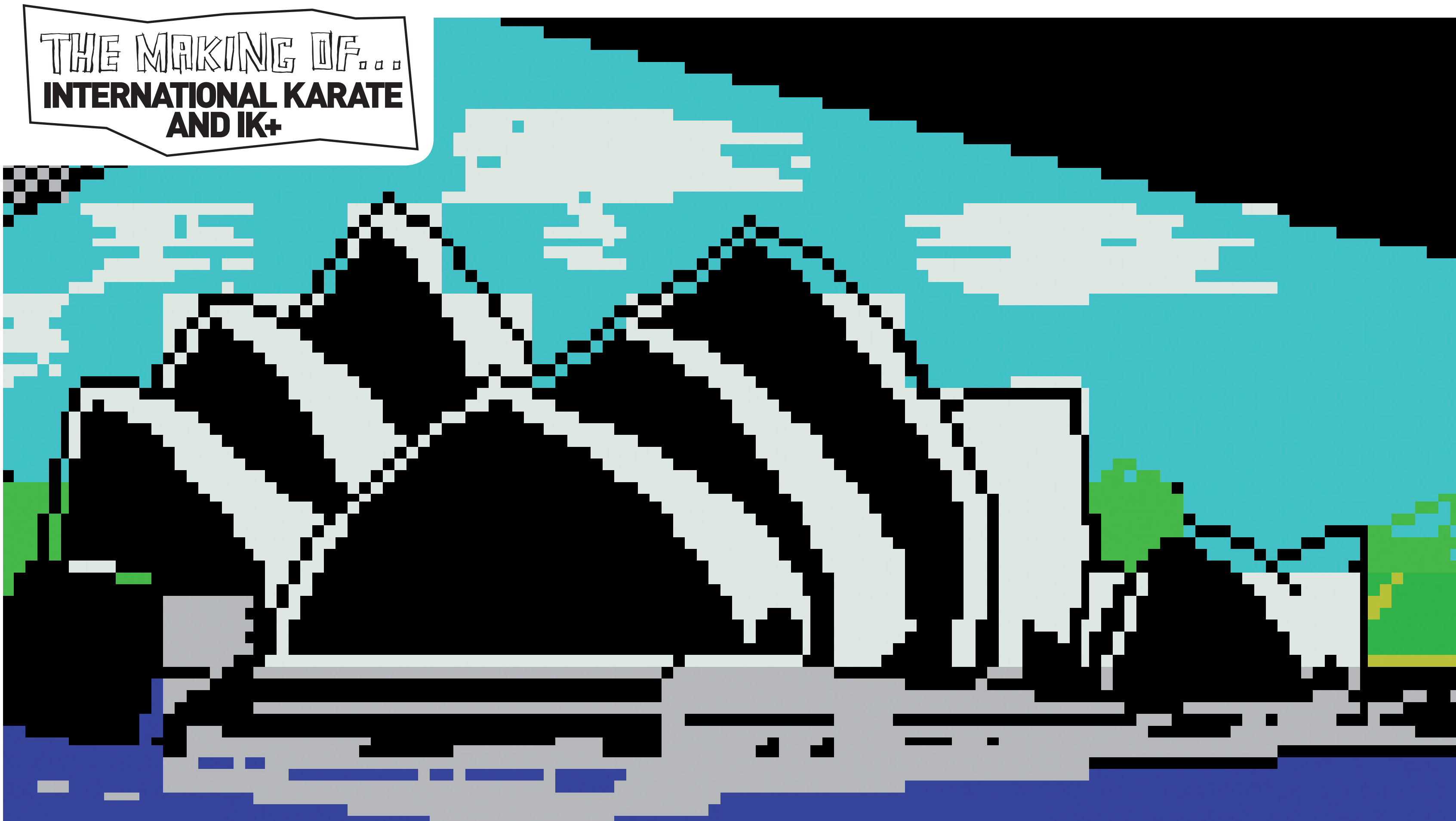
IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** SYSTEM 3
» **DEVELOPER:** ARCHER MACLEAN
» **RELEASED:** 1986/7
» **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1+



INTERNATIONAL KARATE AND IK+





» Ported from the lacklustre Spectrum version, *International Karate* on the CPC never stood a chance

OTHER GAMES IN THE SERIES:

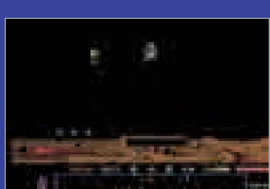
INTERNATIONAL KARATE
IK+
INTERNATIONAL KARATE 2000
INTERNATIONAL KARATE ADVANCE
IK+ GOLD

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

DROPZONE
SYSTEMS: C64, ATARI 800
YEAR: 1984

JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER
SYSTEMS: AMIGA, ATARI ST, PC
YEAR: 1991

MERCURY
SYSTEMS: PSP
YEAR: 2005



from scratch by me and reversed into my proven Atari and C64 game-shell that I'd used on *Dropzone*. This wasn't a conversion from the Speccy version. You've only got to run side by side emulators to see that"

What really made *International Karate* stand out was its fighters. The difference between its characters and those from the increasing number of fighting games was the array of subtle idiosyncrasies written into the background; characters with a distinct personality were a new and ingenious concept that allowed players to identify with the fighters in a whole new way.

The skilled alacrity of the combatants granted a feeling of impending suspense from the second each round began, akin to the quick draw duelling of a Western. A flurry during close-quarter fighting could evaporate into a game of full contact chess when the distance extended into a standoff. No small wonder that such a polished game would catch the attention of jealous rivals.

COPYRIGHT KUNG FU

We should compare *International Karate* to Technos' 1984 *Karate Champ*; if it was a simple matter of *Karate Champ* being a self-styled, unique game which transcended genre – like *Pac-Man* for example – the lawsuit Data East brought against the US release of *International Karate* (published locally by Epyx as *World Championship Karate*) might have made an equitable argument. Initially, the courts thought it did.

"This was in the days before the Internet, or magazines began covering games from outside the UK, and I was completely unaware of the USA lawsuit until one day I got a curious call from the States asking why it was so similar to *Karate Champ* in terms of look and feel. Despite being originally asked to complete the work on a totally different game, I did go off and evolve all the programming, graphics and sound effects myself, and pointed out that a karate game with two karate players wearing red and white karate suits fighting within the familiar rules of a bout of karate is bound to look similar to any other game featuring karate players wearing karate suits and doing karate moves in timed bouts of karate fighting! I think that's why the look and feel and rules became better defined. At a high level of abstraction it's easy to say that *Karate Champ* is like *Fist* is like *IK1* is like *Tekken* and so on. They all feature bouts of timed karate-type gameplay."

Epyx were ordered to recall the product. The decision was appealed against, however, and was summarily overturned when the judge declared that the overly generic concept of a karate bout, regardless of the inevitably similar features between different games, could not be copyrighted.

By the time the lawsuit had helped a second round of *IK* sales to peak, software developers were seeking a way to refresh the concept. Over the years, there would be a plethora of variations on that original theme, yet the most immediate update was a simple idea. Archer told us about his flash of multi-player brilliance.

"*IK+* was an idea I had in a flash of inspiration whilst trying to solve the problem of having a game design where a dozen opponents would be seen seated around the fighting area, set in a dojo. This all came about after a conversation with Activision in mid 86, who asked if I could take fighting games to the next level. Anyway, I wanted the next player to get up and walk into the fighting area as the other went and sat down, or got carried off in pieces!" Archer

THE SKILLED ALACRITY OF THE COMBATANTS GRANTED A SENSE OF IMPENDING SUSPENSE FROM THE SECOND THE MATCH BEGAN, MOST AKIN TO THE QUICK DRAW DUELLING OF A WELL HAMMED WESTERN



laughs while looking back at his time spent watching such antics in a real dojo. He continues, "then I just decided to make it a three player simultaneous game, instead of one on one as with *IK1*. As soon as I had this idea I knew it was a good one, and couldn't work fast enough to make it happen, yet at the same time trying desperately to not tell anyone because it just seemed so simple for me to do – or anyone else!"

THREE TO TANGO

The problem with simple ideas is that realising them is invariably an intricate process, and players were expecting the same slick gameplay from the sequel they'd enjoyed in the original *International Karate*.

"The fun part was dealing with the technical limitations of having three different coloured, animated players on the screen whilst still making use of sprites rather than the slower conventional bit-plot/erase/refill method. I managed to make it happen quite quickly because the animation system from the two-player *IK1* on the Atari 800 version didn't use sprites, and it was extendable and could be used on the C64 with Sprite stuff as well, allowing three players to be drawn."

By their very nature these games must, above all else, be responsive; this was hindered by building cohesive animation frames between the vast array of available moves. Many a pixelised tooth has been sacrificed waiting for the central 'ready stance' to roll around before the next move could be executed, though *IK+* couldn't easily be accused of such lassitude.

"Another problem I had was how to squeeze all the animation frames into the available RAM. There was about 80 or 90 individual frames of movement. These could be flipped when the fighters turned the other way, and on the 16-bit versions the data could be dynamically changed to be one of eight different colours. Then I wanted the 'end' frame of a sequence to skip past the 'standing' frame and straight into the first frame of the next animation sequence without the fighter constantly returning to the default stance because it would slow down the game and make it appear less fluid, so I had to consider this when drawing all the frames."

A major part of the game's appeal is the incredible fluidity of the fighter's movements, particularly in comparison to many of the stiff, clunky graphics that brought down many beat-'em-ups. Other than the music, Archer was a one man team, yet nothing in the broad spectrum of game development suffered due to his resources being spread so thinly, including the outstanding visuals.

"I used a slow motion, steady frame VHS player and watched the end scene of *Grease* with some bloke doing a sideways-on back-flip in a fairground. I laid cellophane on the TV screen and shrunk the size to match the pixel height needed on the computers, then just traced around the arms and legs. Using a pixel editor on the computer I would draw the player's outline before filling in the details. Another one I remember doing was the jump up double face kick. That came from a scene in *The Cannonball Run* where Jackie Chan is kicking the crap out of a load of bikers. He was wearing a white jump suit which kind of made it easier for me to draw around!"

Despite its name, *IK+* was not particularly international, instead making good use of a single oriental courtyard backdrop sporting an atmospheric ocean vista, complete with rippling reflections and waves lapping at the shoreline. It was also replete with novelty animations to catch the corner of the player's eye while their fighter was laid out.

Periscopes, falling cherry blossom, crawling worms, descending spiders and

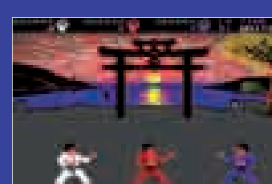


» The groovy Game Boy Color revamp of *International Karate*. It's like, totally outta' sight, man

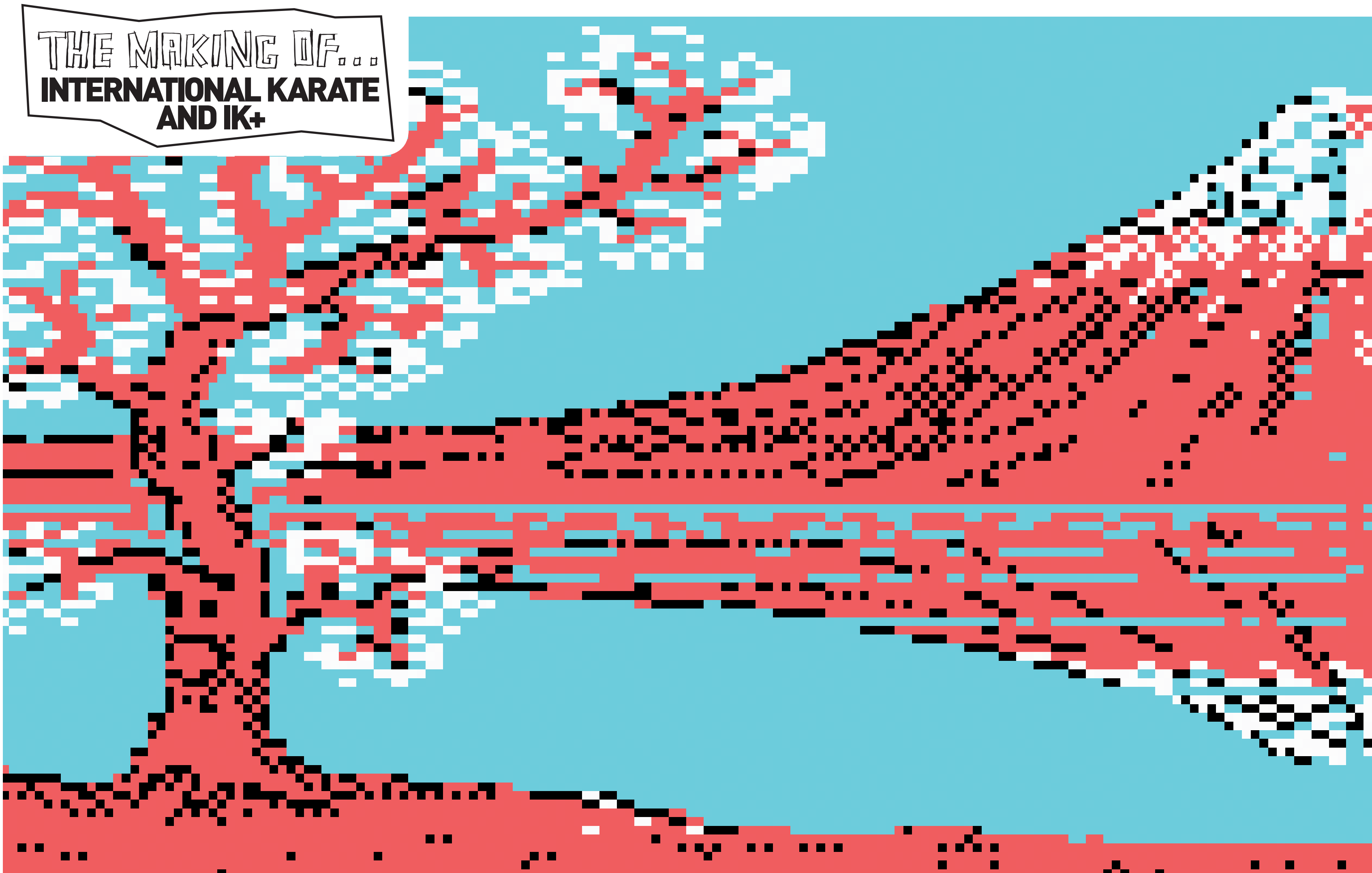
IK+ GOLD

A return to the C64 in 2001 heralded the greatest *IK* update. A member of the German C64 demo sceners, The Dreams, decided it was time to help this game realise its potential. Wolfram Sang (known as Ninja from The Dreams) told us about the making of *IK+ Gold*: "At one of the C64 parties I was bored, and saw the game was running. So I pressed the freeze button and had a look. 24 hours later I had the proof of my concept." Wolfram remembers. As Archer explained, adding that third player was a big task; making it user-controllable was even more intricate.

"The AI worked by putting simulated joystick movements to player three, so I suppressed it and sent the additional data to the game engine. Playing with three players has a lot of side effects, like how to start a game with all these player combinations. Also, the game hardly had any memory left; sometimes I had to recode built-in routines to free up bytes here and there, and the high score saver was tough as I needed to set up memory access so I could use C64's built-in disc routines without ruining the game. That nearly made me quit!" Wolfram's patched disk contains info on how to build his SNES controller-to-C64 adapter that uses the C64's joyports, leaving the user port free. *IK+ Gold* can be found at http://www.the-dreams.de/ik_gold.zip.



INTERNATIONAL KARATE AND IK+



MARTIAL MELODIES

Although Archer MacLean proved himself more than capable of tackling the majority of tasks when it came to creating a game, even he was happy to leave the music to revered SID maestro, Ron Hubbard (though subsequent 16-bit versions of the sequel were handled by David Lowe). Perhaps not remembered among Hubbard's most accomplished works, the theme tune to *International Karate* suited the gameplay extremely well, making brilliant use of pseudo-oriental instruments fused with a steady rock metronome (over ten minutes in length) that set the pace for the bouts perfectly. With the growing following of SID-based 'retro rock' music and concerts, *International Karate* and *IK+* have had their soundtracks compiled and remixed on numerous occasionsl, from techno and dance tracks to a full orchestral rendering at the 2005 Symphonic Game Music Concert, with orchestration and composition by Hubbard.



more frittered about in the background; even a Pac-mania character made a cameo, chomping his way across the Zen garden. It was this kind of hidden detail and charm, alongside the monumental number of cheats and jokes, that endeared *IK+* to players across the board.

"The trouser-drop in *IK1* was only put in because I hate games that look static if the player isn't doing anything, so the little animations were added to beckon the player to join in. This proved to be a big hit with reviewers and players alike, so with *IK+* I just went overboard and put 50 or so cheat codes in. Some were small incidentals and some had a serious amount of code behind them. These days that would all be designed out because it would be seen as a waste of project time, whereas I think it's part of what made the old 8-bit games fun!"



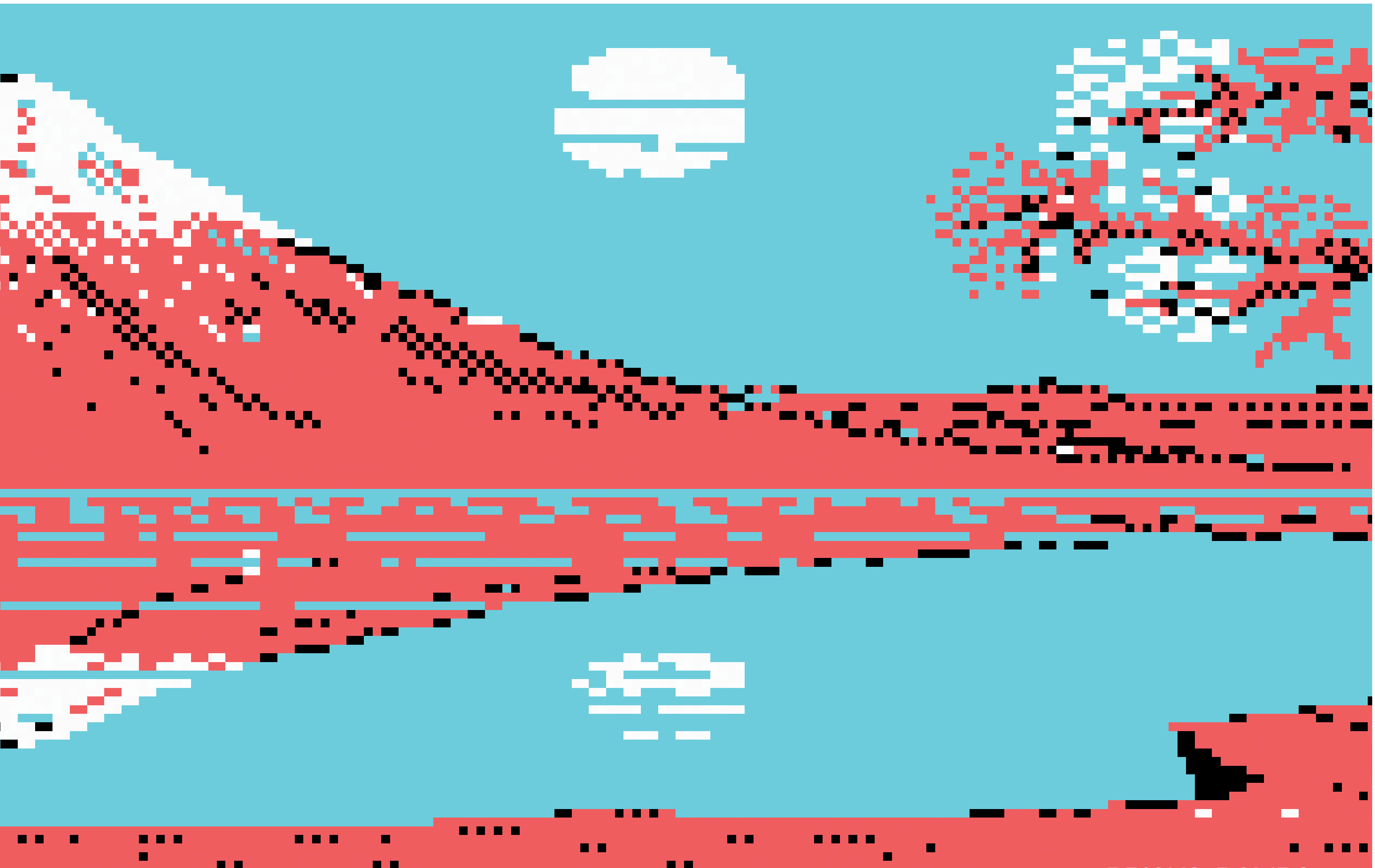
» *International Karate Advance* on the GBA – an update to the Color, but a far kiai from the C64

No good kung fu film is complete without badly-dubbed sound effects, and a game as watchable as it was playable needed exactly the right audio accompaniments to set the tone for battle. Naturally, *IK+* provided a cacophony of shrill war cries, the solid thump of bone on concrete and beautifully immodest Bruce Lee impressions.

"I have fond memories of spending days experimenting with recording dozens of different sounds, such as hitting saucepans with wooden spoons, stamping on melons, breaking bits of wood, and some vocal stuff. Plus, I would watch through endless hours of *Tom & Jerry* cartoons and karate films trying to find clean samples with no other music or voices going on. I used a simple 4-bit sound sampler on the C64 and wrote some additional software to manipulate/compress the samples. I used a decent 16-bit sampler on the ST/Amiga versions, though."

The addition of two extra fists and feet turned a gentlemanly contest into an onslaught of martial pandemonium. Such was the immediacy of the mayhem that a revised scoring system was introduced to ensure the majority of game time wouldn't

THE SIMPLE ADDITION OF TWO EXTRA FISTS AND FEET TURNED A GENTLEMANLY CONTEST INTO AN ABRUPT ONSLAUGHT OF MARTIAL PANDEMONIUM



be spent bowing and re-starting the match, maintaining the dynamism of a frantic rumble without losing any vital momentum.

"The so-called game 'AI' (which didn't have a label in those days) proved to be ingeniously simple in the end, and was based on varying random decisions by the computer to attack, defend, walk or do nothing and I simply narrowed down the time intervals between decisions, and the degree of randomness or accurate decisions, all varying as the difficulty level increased. A computer fighter decision on what to do was based on how far away the attacking player was from the opponent, and some element of the time elapsed since the last move. If the computer player was attacking, the code could work out the exact distance between two players' hit points and target points, then use a look up table to work out exactly what move could floor the opponent, or not, and the code then increasingly chooses to do a precise attack rather than a random thump into the air knowing it's going to miss. There was plenty of other stuff, like if the players were miles apart you would choose moves that would make them walk or leap closer together."

THE LEGEND CONTINUES?

IK+ spread through the entire home computing range, graced with equally faithful conversions across the board – something its predecessor couldn't boast. The *IK* games were also suited to the console scene, and the sequel was ported to the struggling Amiga CD32 in 1994 in hope of improving the flat sales. After its success on the Amiga, it was a practical move that worked as well as any version, but was ultimately doomed to a quick burial along with the star-crossed console.

The Game Boy Color saw the only update of the original *International Karate*, albeit without any input from Archer MacLean. Making use of the extra buttons and improved graphical capability, this was a fun game that played well on the greatly underrated GBC. In comparison, however, the slight spoof on the original game (which uses cartoony characters straight out of the Seventies) cost it a good deal of credibility.

More of a sequel to the Game Boy Color than the original 8-bit title, the GBA saw an adaptation of *IK+*, again sporting the same cheese ball caricatures of B-movie kung fu films. The stumpy characters and the lean toward a button-mashing control system did nothing to help retain the dynamism of its reputable grandfather, however.

After 15 years, different versions and a few dubious updates, Archer has confirmed rumours floating around the Internet about a much fabled *International Karate Deluxe*.

"I started work on this for the ST/Amiga and have a couple of images somewhere of what it was going to look like, including the move selection/assignment sequences. But I don't want to say too much, as I'd still like to develop this with a publisher and team. So if you're a publisher and you're interested, get in touch!"



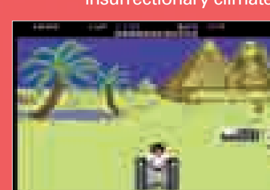
» The *International Karate* bonus round required tested the old grey matter

BRICKS, BOMBS AND BALLS

No fighting game is complete without between-bout-bonus-rounds, and *International Karate* employed an original method of amassing points. Standing firm and resolute, the player must wait for the sensei's command before smashing a stack of bricks with the hardest part of their anatomy. No, I mean their head.

The sequel employed two different methods of breaking up the gameplay. The first involved deflecting bouncing balls with a small shield, though your off-screen training partners would occasionally see fit to hurl a severed head for you to deflect (presumably belonging to one of the bested opponents from your previous match).

Between more advanced rounds of *IK+*, bombs were tossed about the screen for the player to either kick away, avoid, or throw themselves upon selflessly. A stupendously fun bout that was always over far too quickly, and remains particularly poignant during today's turbulent, insurrectionary climate.



Year Released: 1993

Original Price: $249.99 (USA), £199.99 (UK), Yen 24800 (Japan)

Buy it now for: £20-£40 (eBay)

Associated Magazines: Jagwired (fanzine), several inserts, EGM, GameFan, Gamepro, EDGE

Why the Jaguar was great… At launch far more powerful than any other cartridge system, considerably cheaper than 3DO, and there would eventually be some amazing exclusive games released. But the Jaguar and CD add-on only truly excelled after Hasbro Interactive relinquished the rights to it. It still thrives today thanks to conventions and a bustling home-brew community



ATARI JAGUAR

LESS THAN ONE HUNDRED GAMES RELEASED, CORPORATE CEOS WHOSE BEHAVIOUR BEGGARED BELIEF, AND EVENTUAL PUBLIC APATHY; THE JAGUAR WAS A COMMERCIAL FAILURE. YET LOOKING BENEATH THE SURFACE THERE ARE MOMENTS SO AMAZING, THE MACHINE DESERVES AN ENTIRE BOOK DEDICATED TO IT. JOHN SZCZEPANIAK SETS THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON ATARI'S LAST SYSTEM.



Atari's Jaguar is one of the most misunderstood and under-utilised consoles in history. In many ways it's comparable to Sega's Dreamcast: both had a short lifespan, have their own dedicated conventions, were the last consoles produced by their respective companies, and both continue to live on through thriving independent development communities.

Despite being championed as an American machine, Jaguar was actually conceived by British minds in Cambridge, Britain becoming a key supporter of Atari's ill-fated beast. The planned VR headset, launch title *Cybermorph*, and critically acclaimed classics *Tempest 2000* and *Alien Vs Predator* were all developed by Brits (though *AVP* had American assistance).

UNCLE CLIVE?

Martin Brennan and John Mathieson, who had left Sinclair Research after Amstrad took over, formed a Cambridge-based company in 1986 called Flare. It's reported they took with them, or were at least influenced by, the designs of the aborted Loki computer project being developed at Sinclair. Regardless of Loki's alleged influence, the pair began work on their own multiprocessor games machine, which eventually became the Jaguar. *Alien Vs Predator* lead programmer Andrew Whittaker has said on record that apparently some of the Loki technology also ended up in the SAM Coupé and as a result it "shared many interesting features with the Jaguar in terms of its video chip."

Brennan and Mathieson wanted to enhance their system's performance, so contacted Atari. Despite working on the eventually abandoned Panther console (which documents show had several similarities to Jaguar), Atari liked what it saw at Flare. Another studio, Flare 2, was formed to complete development of the new 64-bit system. Jaguar progressed quickly and in 1991 Atari cancelled the Panther, despite having said it was ready for production. Jaguar's launch (which some call hasty) was in December 1993, but Europe was severely undersupplied. It was even released in Japan, though wasn't popular (less than 5000 were reportedly sold), and in March 2006 Famitsu produced a satirical video

Jaguar Festival
Good buddies, a few beers, affordable merchandise, and 32-player networked Jag action; internationally held JagFests are the zenith of Atari gaming (image: Euro Jagfest 2004). We asked Kevin Manne, original co-organiser of the first 1997 event in Chicago, to tell us more. "JagFest was a way for like-minded gamers to get together and enjoy Jag gaming. The biggest draw, I would say, is the networking abilities – JagFest is the only time you'll get to play a large network of *Battlesphere*, *Air Cars* or even head-to-head *Doom*. Not only would it be very expensive to buy all the necessary hardware, finding enough people willing to play locally can be a challenge. JagFest [also] gives fans the chance to see rare and one-of-a-kind items from each others' collections. Rarities such as the Jaguar VR, Jaguar Voice Modems, prototype and unreleased games are all fascinating pieces of Atari history."





there was 12-15 of us TOTAL, doing a Europe-wide launch of a major electronic commodity with absolutely zero budget, getting pages upon pages of press coverage and building an enormous demand. And we were hearing that we were rubbish at marketing, from journalists who knew absolutely nothing about the reality of the situation. You felt like screaming at them 'C'mon then, you come and see if you could do any better with our finances.' But of course we couldn't say a word. We just had to keep on going."



Other developments
From the Jaguar came exciting developments. Many were cancelled, some were birthed into uncaring public arms, while others were created by fans. The Jamma Stick, Rotary Controllers (*Tempest 2K*), and specialist network equipment all came after the system died. Few know the Jaguar hardware was used for arcades. They added Hard Drives and tweaked the technology, but it shows the system's power; CoJag (Coin Operated Jaguar) powered the Area 51 arcade game. Then there was the cancelled Jag Duo (pictured), a combined Jaguar and CD system. There was also the planned VR headset, with a few working prototypes around, and voice modem which would have allowed voice communication during online multi-player. They also intended for Lynx connectivity; AvP originally used it as a motion tracker, but this was eventually scrapped. Finally, there was Jaguar II which was semi-complete. There were no games, but fans are working to finish it.

on it. Strangely, Jaguar even officially made its way to Korea! Daryl Still, of Atari UK, spoke openly. "I was Marketing Manager, PR Manager, and Co-Managed the European Studios (producing titles like *Attack Of The Mutant Penguins* and *Fever Pitch Soccer*). There were only a dozen or so of us left, so we all multi-tasked!" Mr Still elaborated on initial UK reactions. "The press and retail reaction to the hardware itself was immensely positive. More importantly the public demand was huge. Some of the titles were revolutionary. Alien Vs Predator was probably the first FPS that focussed on tension and fear instead of non-stop shooting. As a result, Edge misunderstood it entirely and gave it 4/10 and got completely lambasted by the public. The issue we faced was availability. Europe was promised 250K units for the first Christmas, but received only 25K in early December, with a further 25K on Dec 23rd."

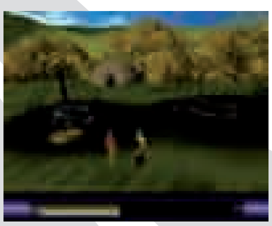
Despite initially outselling the nearly triply priced 3DO, Jaguar didn't succeed. Many blame Atari for rushing; higher quality titles were delayed for several months. I asked Daryl Still about any negativity in the UK. "To be honest, we didn't detect any negativity regarding the machine. Some of the software titles were average, but we always had more demand than we could supply for hardware. Coping with consumer demand and frustrations at Christmas was probably the hardest thing. There is nothing worse than a mother who cannot get what her child wants for Christmas, and we had them camping out in our reception in Slough." According to Mr Still, criticisms were raised not at the system, but their handling of it. "It was frustrating, because

The American side of things was markedly different according to Steven Kent, in his *Ultimate History* book. The Tramiels' reputation and previous tactics alienated many; some retailers refused to stock Jaguar. Only a few of the supposed 200 developers that pledged to make games delivered. Of these, several were lazy 16-bit ports which didn't take advantage of the hardware. With more powerful systems from Sony, Sega and Nintendo on the horizon, public apathy set in. People also disliked the controllers. While having 12 numerical keys which you can customise with game-specific overlays was brilliant in theory, most found them cumbersome, arguing they were inferior to SNES pads. Atari tried to remedy this with the Pro Controller, but few games utilised it.

In 1995, after two years of Atari haemorrhaging cash, Sam Tramiel had a heart attack. A year later Atari was 'reverse merged' with Hard Drive manufacturer JTS. Stock plummeted to record lows, the company went bankrupt, Jaguar ceased, and the Atari division was sold to Hasbro Interactive, later bought by Infogrames. Countless other publications have covered these events, but at Retro Gamer we tracked down, stalked, and like the proverbial Jaguar, pounced on those who were once there in the vortex.

IN THE EYE OF THE JAGUAR

One of the problems was publicly proving Jaguar's strength, something not helped by confusion over 64-bit architecture. US magazines contested its power. Developers, those best to comment,



» If you're looking for a good adventure, try *Highlander* on the Jag CD. It was based not on the films, but on the animated series



» Atari directly challenged the competition. Look, they're about to gobble up Sonic, Yoshi and Mario



» Atari released the Pro Controller near the end, adding 3 extra face buttons and 2 shoulder buttons





» The highly acclaimed *Battlesphere*. Free-roaming combat plus countless ships, explosions, and special effects push the Jaguar more than any other game, showing just how powerful it was

saw things differently. Prolific assistant to 3D Stooges, Kevin Manne spoke on media attitudes. "It's always been an 'us against them' feeling, trying to squelch common misconceptions. EGM once said the Jag was only 64-bit if you added up the 'bitness' of multiple processors, when in fact [it] does have fully 64-bit components. Once a system gets a bad reputation, it's hard to gain mass acceptance."

Doug Engel of ScatoLOGIC, who co-developed *Battlesphere*, and also ScatBOX hardware, responded fervently. "Jaguar was truly a '64-bit system'. Some people equate bitness with power on a linear scale. It's like equating the number of cylinders in a car engine with horsepower. Most people think a V8 has a huge advantage over a 4 cylinder, but [early 20th Century V8s had less power compared to modern 4 cylinder engines]. A 64-bit processor from 12 years ago is easily bested by a 32-bit processor made today. There were lots of arguments saying the Jag wasn't 64-bit. Speaking as a developer, I can say it was!"

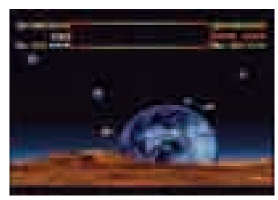
Even without the confusion of how much "bit muscle" its Tom and Jerry chips pushed, many labelled the M68000 processor as not only weaker than up-and-coming systems, but barely superior to past consoles. Engel contests this and elaborates. "The Jaguar was most definitely not underpowered compared to systems like the SNES and Genesis. It was difficult to program for because the development tools were in an unfinished state and the hardware had crippling bugs. There was no knowledge base to consult and nobody had experience. Ten years later, there's a lot of sample code and many with experience, so though we still have to use buggy development tools, it's much easier to make games today than when it came out."

At the time no one harnessed the system's true power, only recently have developers really seen what's capable. Skilled programmer Steven Scavone, key member of 3D Stooges which released Gorf, still develops for Jaguar. Comparing it to systems he's worked on, Scavone elaborated on tech-specs, also explaining in laymen's terms. "It should be coded in as much assembler as possible. This machine flies when fuelled by assembler. The RISCs in proper concert with the 68k will do some absolutely amazing graphics. The Jaguar could [utterly] crush any 2D system. It's a lot easier to program 2D for than the PSX or N64. You can thank the Tramiels for it being 'underpowered'. The chips were not complete and had bugs. The designers, who weren't experts in silicon design, missed fundamentals. Just one more register and [it could have run without stalling all the time]! If they [had fixed this], the Jag would have blown away the PSX. Later 3D titles like *Battlesphere* proved that systems at the time were no match for it."

Quite a revelation! I questioned Scavone further about the PlayStation comparison. "The textures are cleaner. PSX is faster but much uglier and unfixable [since it's built into the] hardware. Jaguar is more flexible and can [remove texture] ugliness. Then there's the VLM in the CD player, which blows PSX away in disc access speed, [which] was awful with load times. Jaguar was surprisingly fast."

High profile coder Scott LeGrand, who co-developed *Battlesphere* alongside Engel, gave his own comparisons. "The Jaguar was anything but underpowered. It had more computational firepower than anything else of that era, including the original PlayStation. [Jaguar] was actually easier to code for than the Saturn. However, PlayStation had hardware 3D acceleration, was a dream to code, and had Sony's

JAGUAR IS COMPARABLE TO DREAMCAST: BOTH HAVE THEIR OWN DEDICATED CONVENTIONS, WERE THE LAST CONSOLES PRODUCED BY SAID COMPANIES, AND BOTH LIVE ON THROUGH INDEPENDENT DEVELOPMENT

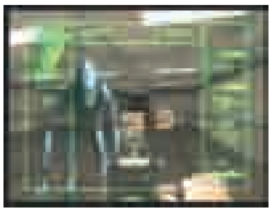
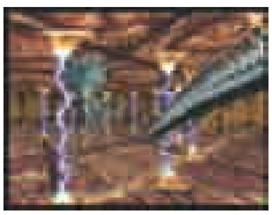


» Jeff Minter is going to be really angry with us… But we preferred *Protector SE* over *Defender 2000*



JAGUAR

“THERE WERE LOTS OF ARGUMENTS SAYING THE JAG WASN’T 64-BIT. SPEAKING AS A DEVELOPER, I CAN SAY IT WAS!”
DOUG ENGEL

» **Above:** *Alien Vs Predator* was the game that convinced many to buy the system. Even today it’s still a supremely playable FPS

marketing muscle behind it. Atari didn’t stand a chance.” PlayStation had built-in hardware acceleration; everything had to be done manually with Jaguar. LeGrand explains more, “*BattleSphere* might have looked better on the PSX [in terms of raw polygon count], but its gameplay would have suffered. The Jaguar’s multiple CPUs let me do things with physics and AI that were a good five years ahead of the rest of the industry. It wasn’t until *Halo* that I finally felt utterly outgunned.”

It had untapped potential, so I challenged the developers on its failure. LeGrand laments “Destiny, pure destiny. But not for the reasons everyone thinks. The Jaguar was a dream to code compared to the PS2. The real reason is that the Tramiels didn’t have the resources to put together an adequate developer relations program, nor did they spend money to [license] titles like *Mortal Kombat 2* (would have been the smartest $1M ever spent). Sony had money, big money.”

LeGrand’s colleague Engel complains there’s too much to cover, adding, “Can’t you write a book on this instead of just an article? Most of the problems relate to the fact that Atari was too small to compete with the giants. Jaguar was rushed because Atari didn’t have the resources to [finish it on time]. Atari lacked the money to properly market it, and they made some poor choices when it came to [licensing] titles.”

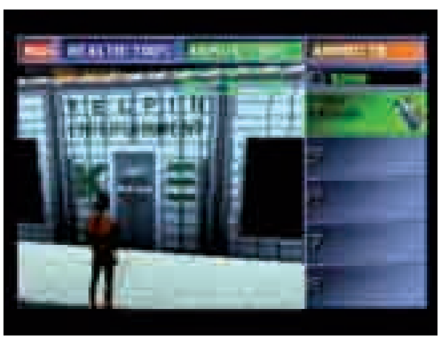
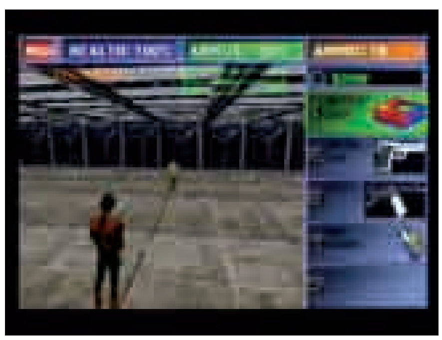
Arguably the biggest Jaguar collector in the world, Jason Smith of www.jaysmith2000.com, who provided resources for this article, agrees with Engel. “Atari marketing for the Jaguar left a lot to be desired that’s for sure! A big part of the downfall without question.”

Those working close to them weren’t pleased with the Tramiels, as LeGrand explains. “The Tramiel kids meant well, all of them, but the skills required to run a corporation just weren’t in them. These guys would run around poaching cash-starved, but innovative technology, and then inject the family fortune into it, until it [failed]. Then they’d pull the plug without telling anyone. [That’s exactly what they did with Jaguar]. Working with Atari was nonsensical. They were great at getting their technology into the hands of developers, but they didn’t have the resources to put together competent developer support.”

Internal Jaguar employee BeeJ West, who worked on BIWN, gave a lengthy and scathing critique of Atari USA. Some printable highlights, “The situation [there] might have broken less hardy souls. What did I think of Atari? Damn, there’s an entire book there. I was utterly horrified by the state of affairs. [Anyone] could see something was rotten in the state of Tramiel. Everyone who worked on *Trevor McFur* knew the game was a total stinker, and the development environment made [finishing] even such a lame game nearly impossible. [It] was so hostile and adversarial [at Atari, that everything] took eight times longer. If that hadn’t been the case, Atari might still be in business.”

Engel was calmer with his appraisal of the Jaguar situation, “They helped occasionally, but mostly ignored us. I could write reams of stories about them, but I don’t want this article to turn into a bash-fest. They did do some positive things. They deserve credit for sending us a devkit when we were starting out and had no reputation as a developer.”

But all of the above is the American side of events. The UK branch was run very differently by Daryl Still. “It was a real mixed bag of emotions, because the buzz was huge, the excitement terrific, but the frustration of not receiving inventory was soul destroying. There were some tremendously talented people there. Really committed people who just thrived upon working with great product, and there was no doubt that Jaguar was a potentially huge piece of hardware. We had total autonomy over how we ran things in Europe. The biggest problem was the US office couldn’t see beyond their own markets and pretty much dominated the available inventory. This was a historical problem,

» Innovative and hugely anticipated, the eventually cancelled *Black Ice White Noise* would have played like a cross between *Shadowrun* and *GTA3*



» **Above:** For the Global Gaming fans: One of many two-page Jaguar adverts found in Korean magazines! **Below:** Destroy entire cities with aplomb, in the German developed *Iron Soldier* – the sequel was later released on Jag CD



» Information on dedicated Jaguar magazines is scant, but there were several inserts provided free with other mags

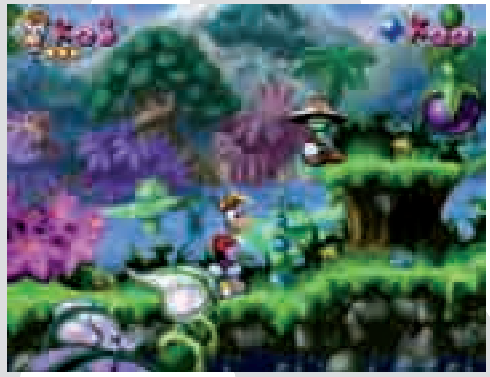




» Along with *AVP*, Jeff Minter's *Tempest 2000* is rightly heralded as one of the finest games on the Jaguar



» Not only is the post-mortem-released *Gorf* for the Jag CD absolutely arcade perfect, but it helped re-invigorate the independent development scene



» Ubisoft's sumptuously wonderful *Rayman* game, which according to sources began life on Jaguar as a proposed exclusive

dating back to the ST. If the US had learned from our [European success with the ST], and given us equal status with inventory and budget, I believe Atari could [have still been a] hardware force today. We produced some great hardware in those days, and backed them up with some super (and some less super) software titles, and I believe, by default, we set a number of practices that people like Sony learned from (both how to and how not to do things)."

DEFENCE AND ALLURE

At this point Karl Morris, who runs www.atari-explorer.com and went to great lengths aiding this article, speaks in Atari's defence, while also providing scans of their financial documents on his website. "With respect to yet more Tramiel bashing, I hope this doesn't seep into the article. Mistakes were made by Atari, but it was imperative the system launched in 1993. Atari pulled out all the stops to ensure Jaguar was a success. To say Atari was putting all its eggs into one basket is an understatement; Jaguar had to work or it was curtains for the company. To bash the [Tramiel] management who were working on thin-air budgets with a one-way-ticket product is silly. It's easy in hindsight to suggest what should have been done. Great people worked there and got behind the product 100%; they all knew what was at stake, and when it started to go wrong and the numbers weren't adding up, and [Sam] had a heart attack, Jack came back and did what any sane person would do: protect his family's interests. The Jaguar is a fine piece of hardware; unfortunately the gamble didn't work out for Atari. Lets not harp on about how "the Tramiels killed the Jaguar" when it was [they] who made it happen."

Even with such debate, the atmosphere is forever jovial and amicable. Which many declare, is part of the allure. Jaguar fans are a relaxed close-knit group; the regular JagFests prove this. I enquire further, about passionate support for a dead system. High profile collector Jason Smith comments, "I think the primary allure of the Jaguar is that it was Atari's final system. Atari has a HUGE following and the Jaguar, without question, was its most powerful offering. Another part for me is all the amazing hardware they were working on that actually became 'working' prototypes. The Jaguar VR, Cortina, Jaguar Voice Modem, etc. They were way ahead of their time."

Another big reason, and one that makes it worth tracking down today, is the continued release of games and independent development community that exists. Dreamcast and Jaguar coder Mickey McMurray reflects. "The biggest draw to the Jaguar is the fact that [it was] made an open system. The documentation, tools, and encryption keys are all available legally for anyone who wants them. Since the Jaguar is free for anyone to tinker with, people can release software, hardware modification and add-ons without fear of legal problems. The JagFests are successful because of this; they have new games and hardware to keep Jaguar fans coming back."

This raises a fascinating precedent, since in 1999 after petitioning, Hasbro Interactive officially, and commendably, released the rights to Jaguar. Something unthinkable to other hardware companies. More importantly the encryption keys to both cartridge and CD games were discovered by Curt Vendel of the Atari Museum, hidden on long-forgotten Atari floppies that were sold after the collapse. Now anyone can develop games, especially on CD, that will run on unmodified machines. This makes owning a Jag CD essential, as many modern releases are on disc.

As well as coding their own projects and unlocking the system's true power, the fans petitioned companies like Telegames to publish stillborn titles. During collapse Atari was sitting on dozens of fantastic, though sometimes only semi-complete games, many of which it's argued would have saved Atari. With no licensing restrictions the community has been, and will continue, finishing these games themselves, then releasing them. Hence why some titles only came out in 2000 and beyond. Unfinished prototypes are also released. With countless proto CDs in his possession, rather than hoarding them, Jason Smith set about making compilations and distributing them among fans. This is another highlight of the community; while unreleased Dreamcast prototypes bit-rot in the hands of private collectors, Jaguar fans, for the most part, happily share things. Which is why BIWN is freely available on the internet and why all profit made on *Battlesphere* was donated to charity. With so many developments that have happened in recent years, there has never been a better time to invest in a Jaguar. With a strange sense of bitter irony, the Jaguar only truly came to life after its death.



» The Jamma Joystick, by Dan Loosen of goatstore.com, is just one of many hardware pieces designed, manufactured, and distributed by fans

WITH A STRANGE SENSE OF BITTER IRONY, THE JAGUAR ONLY CAME TO LIFE AFTER ITS DEATH

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Many special thanks to Jaguar Sector II and http://www.jaysmith2000.com/ for providing developers' contacts. Thanks also to Karl Morris of www.atari-explorer.com for donating several images, and www.goatstore.com for assistance



ATARI JAGUAR

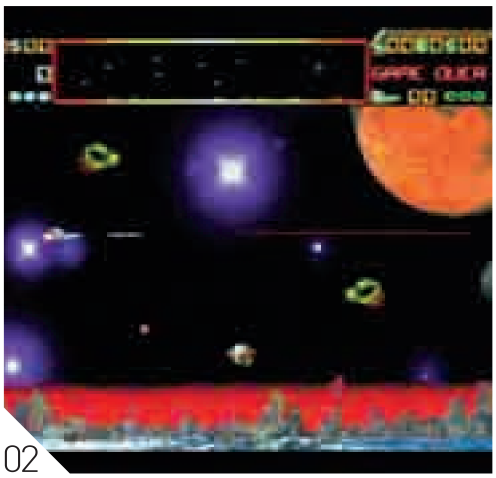


PERFECT TEN GAMES

Atari's Jaguar had so much untapped potential that it pains us to see it so openly scorned by the majority of gamers nowadays. Those in the know however are fully aware of the great games the system boasted. Before you write in, our top ten is bound to be subjective and open to violent debate, and that's what Retro Gamer is all about. Bring it on.



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04

BATTLESPHERE

» **RELEASED:** 2000

» **PUBLISHED BY:** SCATOLOGIC INC

» **CREATED BY:** 4PLAY

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SCATBOX HARDWARE ACCESSORY

01 **The epic space opera *BattleSphere* (both normal and enhanced Gold versions) is a triumphant example of what the Jaguar is truly capable of.** Filled with clever references to popular sci- fi creations, you choose one of seven known intergalactic races (including humans), before being placed in a fully 3D sphere of space and battling it out to become champion. Visually nothing short of stunning, the dynamic AI also impresses, and for a time was unsurpassed. It's also one of the few games that supports up to 32 simultaneous human players over a network (although you're going to have to find a convention in order to experience this. As a kind gesture, all profits from sales of the game were donated to charity. Special thanks to the Official Battlesphere Website for providing our images.

PROTECTOR SE

» **RELEASED:** 2002

» **PUBLISHED BY:** SONGBIRD PRODUCTIONS

» **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** PROTECTOR

02 **If you're looking for a superb update of *Defender*, it's this excellent offering from Songbird Productions that you should be searching out and not Jeff Minter's *Defender 2000*.** The graphics truly are stunning and feature some of the best 2D visuals we've ever seen on Atari's 64-bit console, hell, any console from that period for that matter. Sound is also excellent, with a great array of sampled voices and some rocking tunes that perfectly capture the frantic on-screen action. Insanely fast, full of excitement and sporting some very nifty power-ups this is a perfect example of twitch gaming and deserves to be in every Jaguar owner's collection. If you're a fan of Eugene Jarvis' original game or just love a good blaster pick it up. You're not going to be disappointed.

TEMPEST 2000

» **RELEASED:** 1994

» **PUBLISHED BY:** ATARI

» **CREATED BY:** JEFF MINTER

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** DEFENDER 2000

03 **Jeff Minter's *Tempest 2000* is justification-enough for picking up Atari's ill-fated console.** Beautiful to look at, incredible to listen to, witnessing *Tempest 2000* in action is the equivalent of having a synapse explode in your brain, such is the impact of Minter's masterpiece. Forget the incredibly poor port of the original arcade game that has been included and just concentrate on spending all your spare time with *Tempest Duel*; a gripping deathmatch for two players and of course, the stupendously good *Tempest 2000*. With new enemies, the ability to jump, a selection of smart power-ups, scintillating sound and those eye-melting visuals this is perhaps Minter on his finest form. Luckily this is one of the most common Jaguar games available, so it won't cost you an arm and a leg.

GORF CLASSIC (CD)

» **RELEASED:** 2006

» **PUBLISHED BY:** 3D STOOGES

» **CREATED BY:** JAMIE FENTON

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** NA

04 **The original arcade version of *Gorf* (covered in last issue's High Score section) was developed by Jamie Fenton and released in 1981, featuring five progressive and very different levels, and also several digitised voice samples that heckled the player.** The Jaguar CD port by 3D Stooges, which was created after the system's death and rekindled the development community, has the honour of being the only arcade perfect port to home systems that has all five of the original levels (due to licensing issues, the 3rd *Galaxians* level was normally removed). Unfortunately, due to popularity and a low print run, this is now fairly rare and expensive on eBay, so if you intend to track it down make sure you're carrying a full wallet. A fun, frantic shooter that you'll return to again and again.

IRON SOLDIER 1/II

» **RELEASED:** 1994-7

» **PUBLISHED BY:** KATARI/ TELEGAMES

» **CREATED BY:** ECLIPSE SOFTWARE

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** NA

05 **We're mentioning both *Iron Soldier 1* and *II* as they're perfect examples of what the Jaguar and Jaguar CD could do in capable hands.** Both titles require you to storm around in a huge mech and lay waste to whatever is foolish (or unfortunate) enough to get in your way. Each game feature expansive environments (although the CD version has greatly improved visuals and a storming soundtrack) a variety of well-structured missions and some of the most amazing explosions in any Jaguar game. Some may baulk at the slow pace of both games, but with so much to learn (*Iron Soldier II* boasts even more controls than the already comprehensive original) you'll actually be glad you have some time to think.


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ALIEN VS PREDATOR

» **RELEASED:** 1994
» **PUBLISHED BY:** ATARI
» **CREATED BY:** REBELLION
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SNIPER ELITE

06 Never mind the fact that *Alien Vs Predator* was released a good year after being a supposed launch title, it was a landmark title for both the Jaguar and first-person shooters in general, thus making it more than worth the wait. While *AVP* boasted spectacular visuals (which still impress today) it was the sound that truly impressed. With no music, creators Rebellion used a selection of screams, explosions and gunshots to punctuate the silence of each well-constructed stage. It was gameplay where *AVP* truly excelled though, and while the floaty controls could be annoying, the different attributes of the three main protagonists – human, alien or predator – and strategic gameplay more than made up for it.

HIGHLANDER (CD)

» **RELEASED:** 1995
» **PUBLISHED BY:** ATARI
» **CREATED BY:** LORE DESIGN LIMITED
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** NA

07 The Jaguar and CD add-on were starved of traditional adventures and RPGs (the only other notable exception being *Towers II*, though that's a fairly boring dungeon crawler). So adventures like *Highlander*, which was exclusive to the system, is something to get very excited about indeed. Based not on the films franchise (which was killed by three totally unnecessay sequels) but rather the animated TV series, you play Quentin MacLeod on his quest against rogue immortal Kortan. Controls are comparable to *Resident Evil*; you're able to defeat enemies using fists, sword or a gun, while searching for items that allow progress. Highly recommended, the only problem is needing a MemoryTrack peripheral in order to save. A unique and enjoyable title that's well worth tracking down.

RAYMAN

» **RELEASED:** 1995
» **PUBLISHED BY:** UBISOFT
» **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** KING KONG

08 Decent platformers are few and far between on Atari's Jaguar, so when a title with the quality of *Rayman* comes along you can't really afford to miss it. Originally created exclusively for Atari's machine (it was later ported to the PlayStation and other consoles like the Saturn) Michael Ancel's platformer still looks sumptuous and boasts some utterly stunning locations. Filled with layer upon layer of parallax scrolling and beautiful, hand-drawn sprites it's an amazing technical achievement and perfectly shows off previous claims about the Jaguar's 2D power. Despite the game's toughness there's no denying the adorability of *Rayman* and it's little wonder that Michael Ancel's creation is still appearing in games today. Indeed, Ubisoft has just announced a new title for Nintendo's Wii.

BI/WN (CD)

» **RELEASED:** 2004
» **FREELY RELEASED BY:** BEEJ WEST (DEVELOPER)
» **CREATED BY:** ATARI
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** DONKEY KONG

09 *Black Ice/White Noise* was not officially released due to being cancelled before completion; but since it was such an ambitious title and because the beta can be freely downloaded online, we thought it must be mentioned! Having read the full and unedited Jagwire interviews with the developers, its history alone warrants several articles. The team had a unique vision which today is comparable to a cross between *Shadowrun* without magic (or more accurately *Neuromancer*) and *GTA3*. Players would have been able to traverse a massive cityscape while completing missions, riding vehicles, shooting police, hacking computer networks, talking with NPCs, etc. Sadly, among other things, overly high ambitions killed the project.

MISSILE COMMAND 3D

» **RELEASED:** 1995
» **PUBLISHED BY:** ATARI
» **CREATED BY:** VIRTUALITY
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** NA

10 Despite the Jaguar's VR Headset never getting released, Atari still saw fit to release *Missile Command 3D*, which featured a VR version of the game few Jaguar owners will have been able to play. Apart from this obvious oversight the VR version in particular is great fun to play and gives you a clear example of just how immersive the game would have actually been. Starting off in an underwater base, you'll soon progress above ground and into space itself. All the while missiles are furiously raining down on you and despite the first-person viewpoint it perfectly captures the essence of the original game. Speaking of the original, Vituality also included it, but as with the Tempest seen in Tempest 2000, it was a far from perfect port.

ATARI JAGUAR



and the rest...

While you had to look very hard for them, Atari's Jaguar did boast some solid titles. Many of them are now extremely difficult to track down and can fetch a pretty penny on eBay. See how many titles you recognise...

01 BALDIES
02 PINBALL FANTASIES
03 TROY AIKMAN NFL FOOTBALL
04 HIGHLANDER
05 ATTACK OF THE MUTANT PENGUINS
06 INTERNATIONAL SENSIBLE SOCCER
07 IRON SOLDIER
08 TOTAL CARNAGE
09 KASUMI NINJA
10 DOOM
11 MISSILE COMMAND 3D
12 TEMPEST 2000
13 HYPER FORCE
14 ATARI KARTS
15 FLASHBACK
16 NBA JAM: TOURNAMENT EDITION
17 WHITE MEN CAN'T JUMP
18 SOCCER KID
19 BRAINDEAD 13
20 CYBERMORPH [2MEG]
21 PITFALL: THE MAYAN ADVENTURE
22 SYNDICATE
23 DOUBLE DRAGON
24 MYST
25 WORLD TOUR RACING
26 CLUB DRIVE
27 FIGHT FOR LIFE
28 PROTECTOR
29 WOLFENSTEIN 3D
30 CANNON FODDER
31 ALIEN VS PREDATOR
32 TREVOR MCFUR IN THE CRESCENT GALAXY
33 IRON SOLDIER 2
34 SPEEDSTER 2
35 BUSBY: FRACTURED FURRY TAILS
36 EVOLUTION: DINO DUDES
37 HOVER STRIKE
38 OCEAN DEPTHS
39 FLIP OUT
40 FEVER PITCH SOCCER
41 SKYHAMMER
42 POWER DRIVE RALLY
43 TOWERS II
44 RAYMAN
45 SPACE WAR 2000
46 VID GRID
47 DRAGON'S LAIR
48 AIR CARS
49 RAIDEN
50 I-WAR
51 THEME PARK
52 SUPER BURNOUT
53 ZOOL 2
54 CHEQUERED FLAG
55 RUINER PINBALL
56 WORMS
57 DEFENDER 2000
58 SPACE ACE
59 ZERO 5
60 BATTLEMORPH
61 GORF CLASSIC
62 JAGMIND: BOMB SQUAD
63 ULTRA VORTEK

SCREENSHOTS COURTESY OF ATARI AGE




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THE MAKING OF...

PINBALL DREAMS

Back in the Amiga's heyday, there was a Pinball game that revolutionised the genre and is still heralded by its fanbase. That game is Pinball Dreams, soon followed by the technically superior Pinball Fantasies. Kim Wild chats to Andreas Axelsson about DICE's acclaimed Pinball trilogy and its subsequent success.

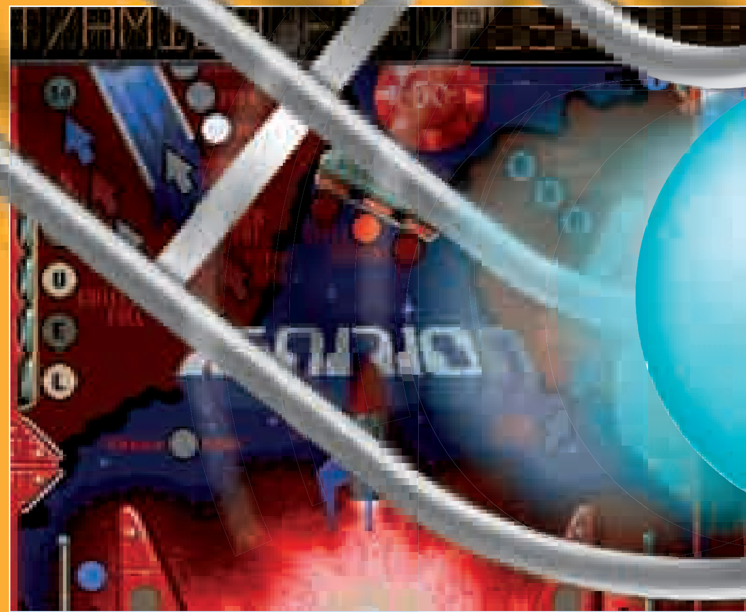
In 1988, a group of Swedish teenagers were members of an Amiga demo scene and began experimenting with new technology. Their name was 'The Silents' and they went by the acronym TSL, (said to stand for 'Trans-Atlantic Speed League'). It was this group that pioneered the idea of developing games commercially. "The demo group who we were part of (The Silents, or TSL), spent part of the summer of 1989 in a summer house in the south of Sweden." explains Axelsson. "One of our Danish members showed some pinball tables he'd been drawing. Olof, Fredrik and I had been thinking about moving away from demos to games, and this was the igniting spark. A pinball game also did seem like a pretty light-weight first game."



» The infamous PartyLand from *Pinball Fantasies*, inspired by countless amusement parks visited by the team



» The PlayStation and Saturn versions of *True Pinball* saw the missing Vikings table restored to its former glory



» "*Ignition*, with its simplicity is one of my most played tables" recalls Andreas Axelsson when quizzed regarding a favourite table

The idea bore fruit and the five individuals, Andreas Axelsson (Goofy/TSL), Ulf Mandorff (SinCos/TSL), Markus Nyström (Chevron/TSL), Olof Gustafsson (Blaizer/TSL) and Fredrik Lilegren, started development on *Pinball Dreams*. After a while, they realised that a game alone would not be enough. "Digital Illusions was formed from the five guys making *Pinball Dreams* as it became apparent that we needed some kind of company name, both to put on the box, but also to manage the income and taxes. So the game was born first, the company was a practicality that came later."

Armed with a company name and a partly developed *Pinball Dreams*, the ambitious group headed over to ECTS, although things didn't go entirely to plan. "Our first visit to ECTS was a real disappointment," recalls Axelsson. "Of the few companies that bothered to take a look, only Bitmap Brothers and 21st Century Entertainment showed any real interest, but nothing concrete ever came out of it. The next year we were better prepared and the game we took with us was more or less complete. Fredrik was 21 and I was 17 at the time of our first trip, so we had tried to be as careful as possible with any too-good-to-be-true offers that companies approached us with. One of my neighbours suggested a lawyer he knew, so we got some help with the contracts from there. In the end, only 21st Century ended up being really interested, so it wasn't like we could pick and choose, even if everything had gone smoothly."

Pinball Dreams had four tables: Steel Wheel, Beat Box, Nightmare, and Ignition. Steel Wheel was themed around trains and the Wild West, something that "may have come about as a result of [Axelsson] living right next to the railroad and having played a lot with model trains while younger"; Beat Box was centred on the music industry and charts; Nightmare was born from the team's love of horror movies; Ignition was themed around a rocket-launch, space and exploration. The cartoon style, which soon became a trademark of the series, was based upon the pinball machines themselves. "As pinball tables contain such a symphony of details you have to use lots of colour, sharp contrast and other techniques that you'll find in cartoons," explains Axelsson. "Markus was our third attempt at finding an artist, so if we had gone with one of our other choices the final style may have been different."

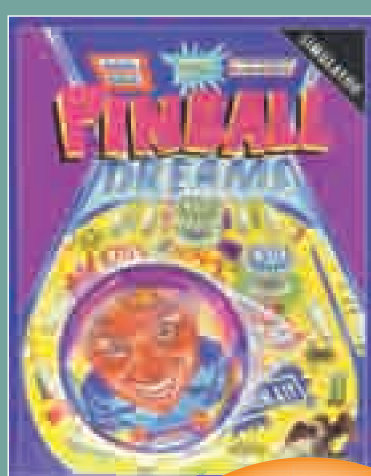
Axelsson cites the *Terminator 2* table as being the biggest influence on the game, although they played as many tables as possible to keep *Pinball Dreams* varied. Re-creating a pinball machine onto a computer was a tough process but, luckily, they had a die-hard pinball fan on the team. "While we all enjoyed playing pinball now and then, Olof was the genuine pinball freak. He'd



» *Pinball Illusions* was the first Amiga game to skip the A500 format and was missing the Vikings table

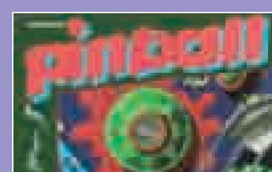


» The Atari Jaguar saw a conversion of *Pinball Fantasies*, which failed to capture the magic of the Amiga version



» This box for Pinball Dreams was solely for the Amiga Zool compilation pack and was different to the retail release

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** 21ST CENTURY ENTERTAINMENT

» **DEVELOPER:** DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CREATIVE

» **RELEASED:** 1992

» **GENRE:** PINABALL SIMULATION

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5+

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

MOTORHEAD
SYSTEMS: PC, PLAYSTATION
YEAR: 1998

BATTLEFIELD 1942
SYSTEMS: PC
YEAR: 2002

RALLISPORT CHALLENGE
SYSTEMS: XBOX, PC
YEAR: 2002



THE MAKING OF...

PINBALL DREAMS

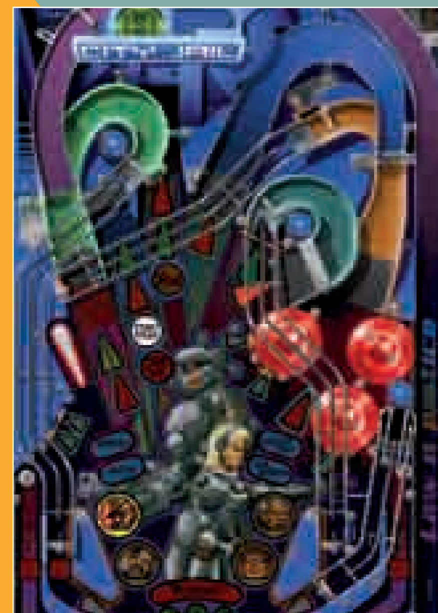
FLIPPING FUN

The success of *Pinball Dreams* and *Fantasies* meant conversions, and the games soon graced other systems including the Atari Falcon 030, Atari ST, PC, GBA, GP32, Amiga CD32, Atari Jaguar, Super Nintendo, Mega Drive, Game Boy, Game Gear and mobile phones. Notably, Digital Illusions weren't responsible for many of the ports. "We wrote the original Amiga version for all three games. All other versions were built by 21st Century or their subsidiaries, with us only providing technical advice. The only exception was when a group of Swedes from Uppsala contacted us after the dreadful version of *Pinball Dreams* on the PC came out. They ended up taking on the task of converting *Fantasies* and *Illusions* with splendour. I did give some support to Binary 9 for the GBA version, which turned out to be quite all right. I haven't seen the GP32 version, but I have spent some time assisting Rocket in Finland with their mobile phone version of the trilogy."





» Music and the charts were the main theme for this table



» Many of the tables looked amazing with loads going on

be on the high-score tables in the arcades wherever he went and he also had friends who could get him access to real tables for sound-recordings. He ended up figuring out most of the scorings and events for the tables. Other than that it was just a genuine interest in getting it as good as possible that drove us onwards." Olof's dedication to pinball meant he spent several days sampling the sound of real pinball machines and then hours tweaking the various aspects in his tracker program. It's a factor that still amazes Axelsson. "He'd occasionally have his Amiga 500 strapped to the back of his bike to always have it along if he got a new idea. With the memory restrictions we had I'm impressed with what he pulled together."

What really made *Pinball Dreams* stand out was its excellent physics engine and similarity to the real thing. "We knew from the start that if we couldn't get the ball right, there was no point in making the rest of the game, so we had this guy, Ulf Mandorff, who had studied technical engineering and who was a self-taught computer freak with many 'firsts' in the C64 demo scene, to think it all out." continues Axelsson "He spent most of his free time on the problem, as far as I could tell, for about six months and then called us up and said, 'It's going to be great'. After the basics were there, we spent the rest of development time tweaking material properties and minor bugs, but the core physics code changed very little after that initial development."

LET ME BE YOUR FANTASY

In 1993, *Pinball Fantasies* followed and was deemed to be the pinnacle of the series. Although there were still only four tables, each was three screens high, in comparison to *Dreams*' two; the animations were more advanced, had superior music and the tables featured three flippers. The tables are Partyland, Speed Devils, Billion Dollar Gameshow and Stones 'N' Bones which came from various sources. "Billion Dollar Gameshow was inspired by a game from *Bally*, but most of the others were just the result of late night brainstorming and trying to make them as varied as possible. In a way they reflect things we enjoy in real life. While doing *Pinball Fantasies* we spent several weeks in Los Angeles, visiting all the amusement parks, Disney Land, Six Flags and so on, which probably influenced Party Land. Speed Devils came from Markus' love of cars, and as Nightmare has been such a favourite we decided to make another (Stones 'N' Bones)."

The Amiga CD32 version followed, as did an improved AGA edition on four floppy disks. In 1995 the PC version *Pinball Fantasies Deluxe* on CDROM featured an additional four tables: Tarantula, Jail Break, Soccer and Jackpot. Although some prefer *Pinball Dreams*, both rocketed to the top of the charts selling in excess of 650,000 units between them at the time. The franchise still earns money via the re-make that's available on the GP32, the release of *Pinball Challenge Deluxe* on GBA (including the tables from *Dreams* and *Fantasies*) and various mobile phone conversions.

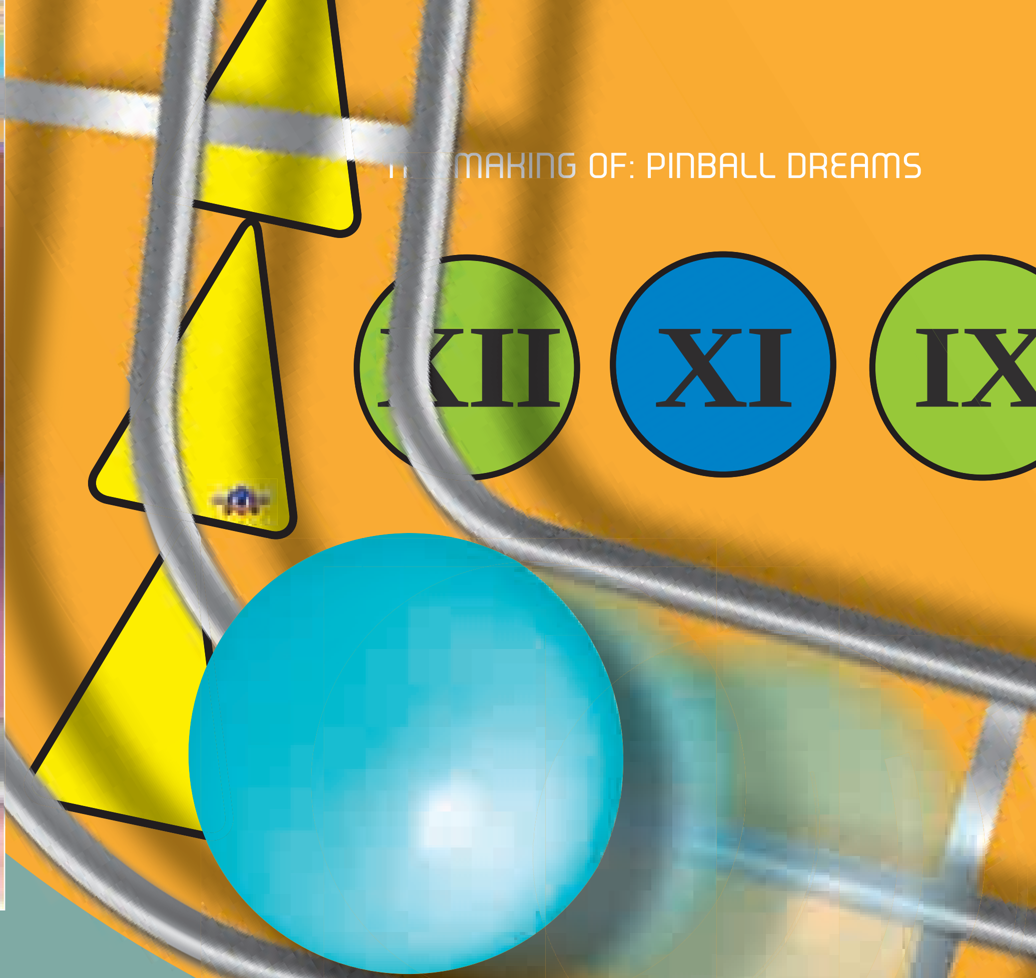
So what is it about *Pinball Dreams* and *Fantasies* that has stood the test of time so well? Axelsson feels that the key is attention to detail. "Apart from programming the game, I designed most of the table layouts, as I knew how best to utilize the various features in the engine. Olof then figured out how the scoring system would work, and together with Markus we tried to come up with as many varied themes as possible. Each table was also tweaked and redesigned numerous times over the three years it took to create *Dreams*. We played the game a lot and showed it to friends. Everything we didn't like or they didn't like,

"SO THE GAME WAS BORN FIRST; THE COMPANY WAS A PRACTICALITY THAT CAME LATER"

ANDREAS AXELSSON



» Many of the pinball tables were directly influenced by the passions and interests the team had in real life



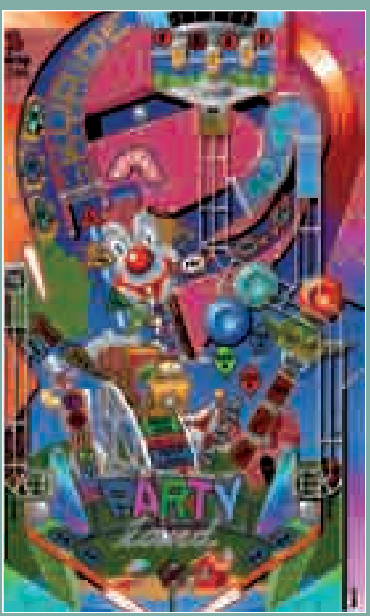
"ALL TABLES WERE ALSO TWEAKED AND REDESIGNED NUMEROUS TIMES OVER THE THREE YEARS IT TOOK TO CREATE DREAMS" ANDREAS AXELSSON

we tried to change. In the end I think it became very polished and that's a quality you see in most highly successful games."

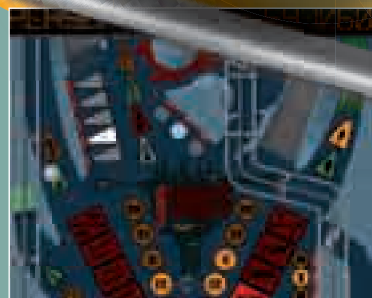
ENDING THE TRILOGY

The last game in the series, *Pinball Illusions* was released in 1995 on the PC and Amiga 1200 (the Amiga 500 would not see a version) although it failed to encapsulate the success of its predecessors. Starring three tables: Babewatch, Extreme Sports and Law 'N' Justice (the fourth, Vikings was omitted from the Amiga version) the game was visually impressive and possessed realistic ball physics plus a new multi-ball feature. As a pinball game it's decent enough, but the legacy of *Dreams* and *Fantasies* made it look inferior to its peers. "By the time *Illusions* appeared we'd been working on pinball games for many years and really wanted to try something else instead," admits Axelsson. "Our focus was therefore not as good as it should have been; having moved from our home town to Gothenburg after *Fantasies* was completed didn't help either. *Pinball Illusions* lacks the love and passion we had when making the first two games." Digital Illusions went onto re-create the game for PlayStation and Saturn, completely re-writing it and re-naming it *True Pinball*, implementing the missing Vikings table.

Although there was a *Pinball Dreams 2*, this was developed by Spidersoft rather than Digital Illusions. "*Pinball Dreams 2* was made by 21st Century Entertainment and we had no involvement in that one, so I guess they didn't have what it took to get the feeling right."



» The gorgeous looking Partyland from *Pinball Fantasies* in all its three-screen high glory



» The team's love of horror movies led to this creation while this table would later inspire Stones 'n' Bones in *Fantasies*

Since its smash hit trilogy, Digital Illusions has gone on to create an assortment of games for different formats including PlayStation, PC and Xbox. Digital Illusions (now more often referred to as DICE) registered on the Swedish stock exchange in 1998 and has since experienced tremendous growth. It was the release of *Battlefield: 1942* and their respective sequels that saw an increase in popularity. Electronic Arts bought out shares to the company and now owns 62% as of March 2005. Andreas Axelsson still remains with the company.

With retro becoming almost fashionable, will the games be re-released? Axelsson isn't hopeful. "Digital Illusions don't own the rights to any of the pinball games apart from *True Pinball*, and *Illusions* is owned by me and the rest of the founders, so it's not something you're likely to see come out of DICE, as far as I can tell. I think it'd fit very well on Xbox Arcade though."

THE FUTURE

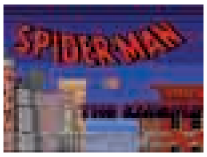
The legacy of *Pinball Dreams* lives on in the re-creation of *Pinball Dreams* for the C64. Werner van Loo started development after a bet with CreamD on the #c-64 channel on IRC. "The argument was that a game like *Pinball Dreams* could never be converted faithfully to the C64. Naturally, a few things had to be omitted to fit the C64. I changed the score-display from a 'LED-bar' to a dot-matrix thing as you can't make nice diagonal lines in the upper border of the C64. My flippers have less animation frames; I think the Amiga version uses 14 frames, while I'm using seven. I left out two tables (Steel Wheels and Beat Box), due to time. Although the game is not complete, the demo can be downloaded from http://www.interstyles.nl/pd.d64, with the completed version set for release this year.





SPIDER-MAN VS THE KINGPIN

"MY SPIDEY SENSE IS TINGLING"



- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **RELEASED:** 1991
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MEGA DRIVE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £3



HISTORY

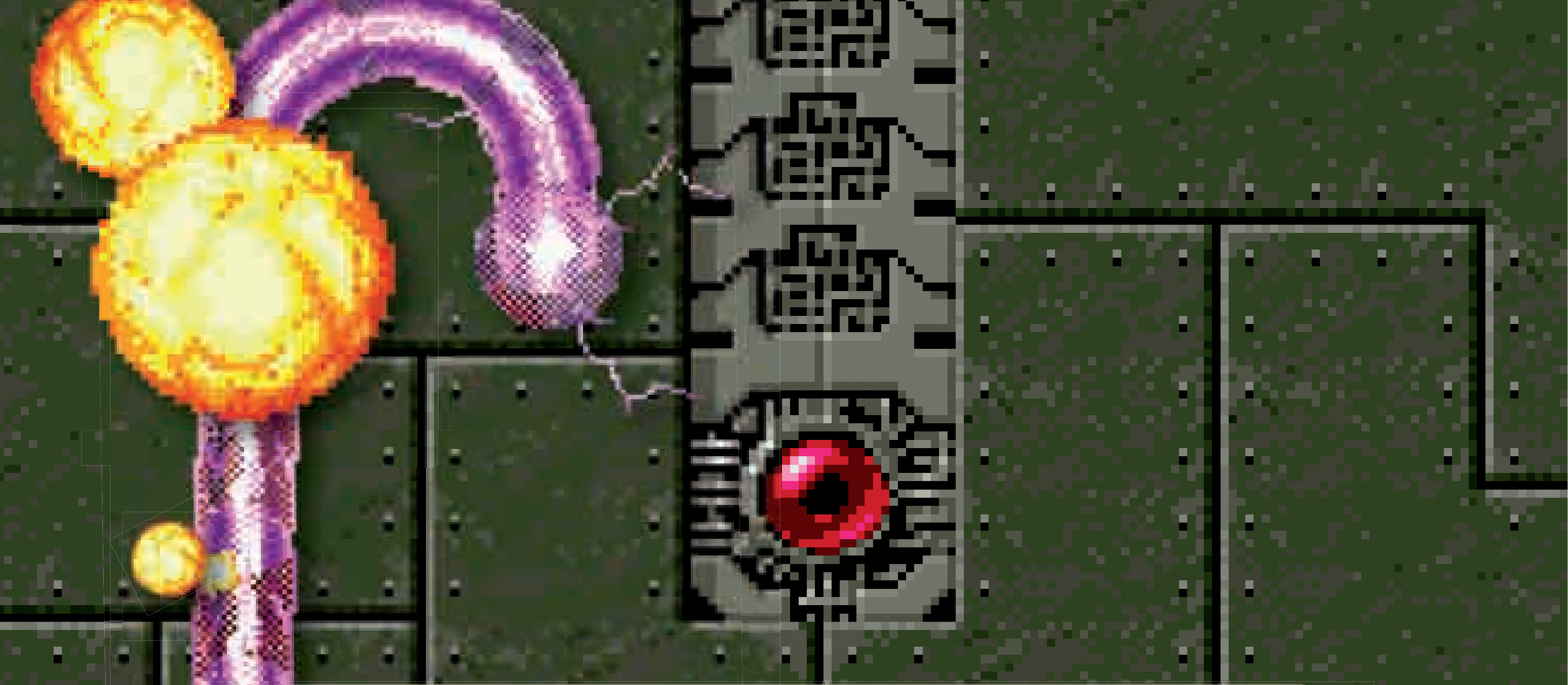
Superhero games have been a staple part of the gaming diet for as long as joysticks have existed. Many are exciting adventures in spandex whilst others are a fierce kick to the weak spot (we mean you, *Superman 64*) but hardly any managed to capture the 'reality' of being a super-hero.

Sega's *Spider-Man* is an exception to the rule because it recognises the human side of our web-spinning hero. Like few games before or since, it acknowledges the secret identity of Spidey and allows the skills of Peter Parker to play their part in the action. Parker's Manhattan apartment, for example, can be used as a safe house when the game gets too tough. So when Spider-Man's health drops to a dangerous level he can swing back home and chill out in the living room, safe from the threat of criminal activity.

Like the original comic book, Spider-Man's real-life job also has an effect on the action. At any point you can use Peter's camera to take a snapshot of the screen and when the level is complete your photographs are sold to the Daily Bugle in order to fund the purchase of more web fluid. What makes this so integral to the enjoyment of the game is that different photos are worth varying amounts of money depending on the impact of the image. Take a snap of a common street thug for example and you'll only earn a meagre $5 dollars but if you manage to capture a dynamic shot of the Hobgoblin in full flight then you'll net a cool $300.

Spider-Man's photographic gameplay creates a true risk/reward scenario that is absent from most other super-hero games. Do you go for the quick kills and live with the lack of webbing or risk defeat as you pause to take a picture of your super-powered foe? It's a simple choice that made *Spider-Man* the most realistic super-hero game long before polygons and accurate physics were in common use.





THE DEFINITIVE RAIDEN

STUART CAMPBELL BRINGS US THE SECOND IN HIS SERIES OF STUART CAMPBELL'S DEFINITIVE GUIDES TO THE GAMES THAT DEFINED THEIR GENRES. THIS MONTH, THE ULTIMATE TRUTH ABOUT RAIDEN. YOUR REPORTER: STUART CAMPBELL

Alert readers will recall Retro Gamer 24's definitive guide to the *Gradius* series of horizontal shooters, in which we untangled a mess of completely distinct games with confusingly similar titles. This month, however, we're going to sort through a different kind of muddle, centred around another famous shmup lineage – but this time, one that's largely comprised of what are ostensibly only two different games. Yet the plethora of releases bearing the name *Raiden* covers a range of games of such widely differing content, styles and qualities that they can barely be held to share the same DNA.

The first *Raiden* attracted no great attention when it made its 1990 arcade debut through little-known Japanese developer Seibu Kaihatsu. (Trivia fact: the original title on release was *Rai Den* – two words – meaning 'thunder' and 'lightning' in Japanese.) At first glance, it was just the latest in what at the time was a long line of shameless bandwagon-jumping rip-offs of Toaplan's 1987 smash-hit vertical scroller *Flying Shark*. But soon the game developed a popularity that belied its generic nature, and it spent over three years in the coin-op charts (more than two of them in the top 20). The key was probably the simple but clever armaments system, which bestowed the player's 'Raiden Mk.II' fighter with just two kinds of gun and two kinds of missile, but by making them switchable in play immediately gave the game lots more flexibility and depth than the average shooter of the era.

This simple dichotomy of attack tactics – between fierce, focused fire and wider-spreading, weaker weaponry – has been copied by countless clones ever since. Ironically, though, some of the clones have been truer to the spirit of *Raiden* than its own home conversions and supposed sequels have. Join us now for a *Stars In Their Eyes*-style odyssey through history, in which *Raiden* will be faithfully recreated, brutally butchered, thoughtfully enhanced, crudely mauled, respectfully honoured, cynically debased and finally – yay! – resurrected by a kind and loving Shmup God. Read on, gentle viewer, in the safe and certain knowledge of a happy ending.

1990
RAIDEN (ARCADE)

The original *Raiden* has a rather Spartan, gimmick-free nature which probably contributed to its lasting appeal as much as the weapon system (and well-balanced difficulty) did – while it gets extremely frenetic by quite an early stage, the enemy attacks remain 'realistic' in nature, with none of the over-the-top screen-filling geometric 'bullet-hell' attacks that characterised many later shmups. There's nothing fancy going on here, just tanks'n'planes, battleships'n'bullets, stirring music'n'crunchy, solid sound effects – pure old-school, before old-school was 'retro'. (Indeed, the original *Raiden* is timeless enough to have been recently ported to UK-protocol mobile phones, although good luck getting anyone to sell you it.)

PLAY IT NOW ON: Raiden Project (PS1)



» Little-known bonus fact – when you beat the game and cycle back to Stage 1, the music gets funked-up with some extra drums

» In 'checkpoint' versions the power-up Fairy, if revealed and collected, returns at the start of your new life and drops some extra weapon pick-ups to get you started. Bless her



1991
RAIDEN DENSETSU (MEGA DRIVE/FM TOWNS)

The first home port of *Raiden* ('Densetsu' translates roughly as 'Legend'. The US title for *Densetsu* was the meaningless *Raiden Trad*) was a good solid conversion with the coin-op levels accurately recreated and almost all the enemies and secrets where they should be. The MD and FMT games are among many *Raiden* ports which return you to 'checkpoints' earlier in a stage when you die, whereas the coin-op (except for one variant released in Taiwan) simply carries on without interruption from the point where you got killed. You might argue that this is to prevent lazy players simply continuing all the way to the end on their first go, since at home you no longer have to put more money in. But since all the home ports restrict your number of credits anyway, it's a baffling and significant hike in the difficulty.

The version for obscure Japanese console/computer the FM Towns is basically arcade-perfect, but also features two unique Competition Modes, in which you're given just one life with which to either score the maximum points on Stage 1 only, or get as far as you can into the whole game.

The MD port suffers from a very drab palette, but its only real gameplay difference from the arcade is that the bosses (and some of the larger mid-level enemies) seem to have had several layers of extra armour-plating and are extremely tough even in Easy mode, taking twice the punishment of their coin-op counterparts. But if you think they're mean, you should see the MD game's real distinguishing feature: the Special Stage.

A bonus level after the normal game's credits have rolled, it's the most insanely, impossibly hard thing you'll ever play, and can only have been meant for people using a cheat cartridge like the Game Genie. If you finish it (and infinite smart bombs are the minimum requirement to have a chance), it announces '1991: *Heavy Nova*', which is another Mega Drive game by Micronet (coders of the MD *Raiden* port). You'd think it might be another shooter, from which the level had perhaps been borrowed, but it's actually a rather clunky side-scrolling beat-'em-up. Bizarre.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The Mega Drive emulator Fusion and the FM Towns emulator UNZ

1981
RAIDEN (PC ENGINE)

In the early Nineties the PC Engine was the hardcore gamer's shmup-platform of choice, and alongside the stellar conversions of *Gradius* and *R-Type*, this Hudson Soft-developed port of *Raiden* was one of the prime reasons. It's a superb piece of work, putting the basically 8-bit machine into overdrive to capture the essence of the coin-op perfectly, using the full screen (without the big ugly status bar that disfigures the MD version) and a rich, bright palette. It makes a very few subtle concessions (like different scenery under Stage 2's flyovers and the slightly altered behaviour of a couple of bosses), and it also features the 'checkpoint' system, but it gets rid of the over-armoured enemies and overall it plays even more accurately than *Densetsu*.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The PCE/CD emulator Magic Engine (in the pretty 'TV Mode' for a more authentic aspect ratio)

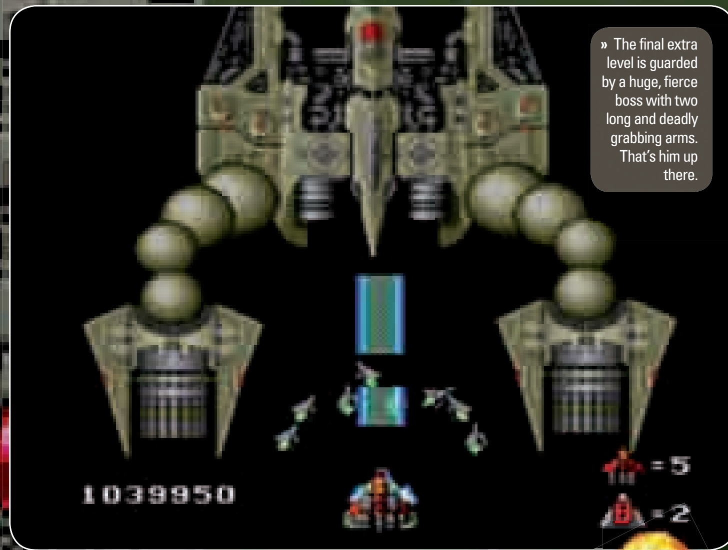
» As you can clearly see from these screenshots, the PCE version was also quite a bit faster than the Mega Drive one



1992
SUPER RAIDEN (PC ENGINE CD)

This enhanced version of the original PCE release, which gave the game a fantastic CD soundtrack in the classic Japanese-guitar-rock style, is one of the most celebrated *Raiden* games ever, and rightly so. (Other CD-based ports, like the PSOne's *Raiden Project* and the FM Towns *Raiden Densetsu*, also offer 'remixed' versions of the soundtrack, but they're both – particularly with the PSOne – far inferior to Super's.) As well as the splendid music, *Super Raiden* also added two all-new levels at the end of the normal eight – both of them maelstroms of frantic, unrelenting mayhem. The new stages (unrelated to the Mega Drive game's Special Stage) featured particularly superb wigout soundtracks, and in the unlikely event that you manage to see off the final boss, you're also treated to a brand-new end-sequence. Obviously lacks the PlayStation port's prettiness, but for our money this is the best *Raiden 1* you can play.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Magic Engine



» The final extra level is guarded by a huge, fierce boss with two long and deadly grabbing arms. That's him up there.

1992
RAIDEN TRAD (SNES)

And here, conversely, is the worst. These two *Raiden* ports, released barely three months apart, illustrate the point that alert readers will remember from the intro. They're allegedly both conversions of the same game, but *Super Raiden* and *Raiden Trad* have different stages, different layouts within the stages they share, different power-up progressions, different restart methods, enemies and items in different places, and generally could hardly be any more dissimilar to each other if they tried – and that goes double when it comes to quality. We'd need half the feature to list everything that's wrong with SNES *Raiden* – for example, almost every stage has had whole chunks crudely hacked out of it, culminating in the pale imitation of Stage 6, which is nearly all missing – but its one saving grace is that while the arcade, PC Engine and Mega Drive versions each take about 40 minutes to play all the way through, the butchered levels and absurdly easy difficulty level (despite your only being allowed a single continue, though in this version you don't get sent back to checkpoints) means the SNES one is over in barely half that time, and then you can smash it with a hammer. Really disgracefully bad.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Don't bother

1993
RAIDEN 2 (ARCADE/PC/PSONE)

With an unexpected hit on their hands, Seibu didn't want to take any chances when it came to messing up the formula they'd stumbled across, so when it was time for a sequel they produced a game that was even more generic than its parent. With an almost-identical setting (five stages of fortified coastal woodland, followed by three in space), one largely useless new type of smart bomb and just a single addition to the Raiden Mk.II's standard weaponry, *Raiden 2* was basically the same game again. (An updated arcade version, *Raiden 2 New*, was released in 1996 to coincide with *Raiden Fighters*, with tweaked level order and new music. This music is almost certainly the 'New Release' soundtrack found in the PSOne version of *Raiden DX* but with *R2* still unemulated it's impossible to be 100% sure.) That addition, though, marked the debut of one of the most popular weapons in the history of videogames. The purple Plasma Laser (or Toothpaste Laser as it was soon dubbed) locked onto a target, but could then bend and twist and loop around the screen like a lethal neon Slinky, zapping other enemies while still gripping on to its original victim. It was effective and spectacular, and while sneered at by some joyless 'hardcore' players, the Toothpaste Laser was so much fun to use that *Raiden 2* – despite otherwise totally lacking in invention – soon eclipsed even its mighty predecessor in popularity.

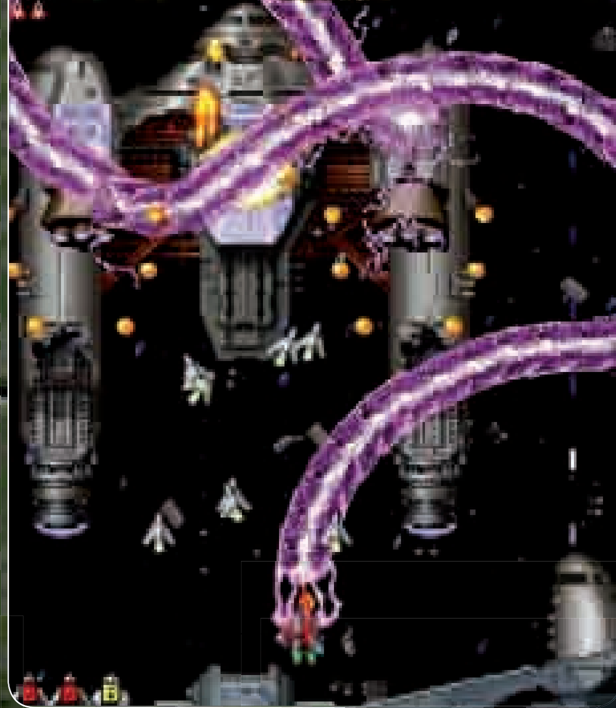
PLAY IT NOW ON: Raiden Project (PSOne)



» On SNES, your smart bomb detonates in the centre of the screen no matter where you actually drop it. That's how rubbish this port is



» The PSOne ports are arcade-perfect, except for inexplicably bad renditions of the music



» The mighty Toothpaste Laser in full effect in the awesomely fantastic *Raiden DX*

1994
RAIDEN DX (ARCADE, PLAYSTATION)

Lesser videogames magazines will tell you that *Raiden DX* (the coin-op was brought to the Japanese PS in 1997, which is the version we're going to talk about here since the arcade version isn't emulated and you'll never get to play it) is nothing but a slightly tweaked, essentially pointless revision of *Raiden 2*. These people know nothing. *Raiden DX* is the finest shmup of its generation, and while it does have a large chunk of *Raiden 2* within it (in the form of the five *R2* stages that make up Novice Mode), there's so much totally original content in *DX* that we've barely got room to touch on half of it.

The most inventive addition is the misleadingly-named 'Training Stage' – a rock-hard challenge which takes place across a single all-new level 15 minutes long, in which there are no 1-ups and no continues – but that's just a fraction of what's packed in here. There's the 'Special Stage' (an uncompromisingly ferocious all-boss battle played not for points but against the clock), Expert Mode (nine all-new stages, except with the bosses from *Raiden 2* and music from *Raiden 1* – practically a whole new *Raiden* game in itself), all sorts of impressive bonus material to unlock (galleries, perfect-game demonstration videos and the like), and to cap it all the basic game features a totally new scoring mechanism that completely changes the way you play. If you only ever buy one *Raiden* game, make it this one.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The Playstation emulator ePSXe

1994
RAIDEN (JAGUAR/AMIGA/PC)

As the sequel reinforced the series' popularity, back in Blighty developers Imagitec made three reasonably competent versions of *Raiden* for some long-overdue UK releases, using largely the same code for each one. The three games are all quite different in execution, however. The DOS-only PC version occupies the full width of the screen, with only minimal scrolling, but offers the hapless player a choice between music OR sound effects. The Jag port manages both at once, but has a massive status bar taking up a third of the now-cramped screen. And the Amiga game (written for AGA machines only) employs a completely new and rather garish palette, and also reverts to having to choose between music or sound. The Amiga version was never published – apart from a one-level demo given away on a coverdisk – but it was completed, and the author is currently trying to retrieve the source code from his archive tapes for public release.

The main characteristic/failing of all three Imagitec releases is that – like the coin-op but unlike all the other console ports – there's no rapid-fire option to save your joints from the pain of having to relentlessly pummel the fire button to get a semi-decent stream of shots. (Which is bad enough on an arcade cabinet, but sheer hell on a joypad.)

PLAY THEM NOW ON: WinUAE for the Amiga demo, and the DOS emulator DOSBox for the PC version (which won't work on Windows PCs otherwise) – the Jaguar version is only currently supported by Virtual Jaguar, and not very well, so you'll need the real thing

» Weirdly, the Jaguar is actually still drawing the play area behind the status bar, as you see when it disappears at the end of a stage



1996
RAIDEN FIGHTERS (ARCADE)

Now things get a little strange. Originally developed as an unrelated game by the name of *Gun Dogs*, but after some brand-recognition test-marketing this rather standard-issue shooter (in fact largely a rip-off of the *Strikers 1945* series from Psikyo, which debuted the previous year) was hurriedly adopted into the *Raiden* family. The good old Raiden Mk.II warplane (complete with Toothpaste Laser, but not the other two weapons) is now just one of seven fighters you can do battle in, each with a vastly different armoury of offensive capabilities (and a different order of tackling the five stages), and you can also attach up to two drone ships to your craft. It's a faster, more frenetic game than any of the previous *Raiden*s, and while it has cameo appearances from a few other icons of *Raiden* (like the hidden bonus-point 'Miclus' and the power-up fairy), it really doesn't feel like part of the same series.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The arcade emulator MAME. None of the *Raiden Fighters* games has ever been ported to a home format. (An enhanced Xbox release, *Raiden Fighters Evolution*, was sadly canned early in the machine's life, as a Saturn conversion of *RF1* had been in 1997)



» Cunningly hiding in the trees, the Beast Wing unleashed its surprise missile attack with relative impunity

» This is the '2000' version of *RF2*, as you can tell by the appearance of the Raiden Mk.IIb



1997
RAIDEN (ATARI LYNX)

Not for the first time in this feature, we encounter a game called *Raiden* that purports to be a conversion of the arcade original, yet is so vastly different from it as to constitute a separate, passingly-related game. Originally coded for the Lynx in 1994, this wasn't actually released until 1997 (by dead-format specialists Telegames) long after the handheld console had shuffled off this mortal coil. To make the sprites visible on the tiny display, the viewing area is extremely zoomed in, and your ship – which is the blue 'Mk.IIb' usually flown by Player Two, for some reason – has hardly any room to manoeuvre, making life extremely difficult. Taking pity, the game gives you a maximum-power pick-up almost straight away, at which point things get very easy until the end of the level, when you lose all your power-ups but get your totally ineffectual smart bombs restocked.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Lynx emulator Handy.



» In the Lynx version, defying all known core *Raiden* principles, it's possible to use the laser and Vulcan-cannon weapons at the same time

1997
RAIDEN FIGHTERS 2 (ARCADE)

After waiting three years between *Raiden* and *Raiden 2*, Seibu didn't waste any time in churning out sequels to *Raiden Fighters*. However, the original Japanese release of *RF2* rather curiously severed its only solid link to the lineage, by excluding the Mk.II from the choice of seven planes available at the start. A hastily revised US version put it back in, along with two additional fighters for a total of ten on the starting menu. Otherwise, the game's basically just a new set of levels for *RF1*. (For those of you not confused enough yet, three years later a China-only version with the ungainly name of *Raiden Fighters 2 2000* was released, featuring all 14 of the player craft from 1998's *Raiden Fighters Jet* (see below). As far as anyone can tell, it's otherwise the same as ordinary *RF2*.)

PLAY IT NOW ON: MAME

1998
RAIDEN FIGHTERS JET (ARCADE)

Another year on, another *Raiden Fighters* sequel, but this one's gone a bit tonto. There are now a whopping 14 planes to choose from, including both the Mk.II and the Mk.IIb (which in *RFJ* comes armed with the original Vulcan spread cannon from *Raiden 1* and the scatter-bomb from *Raiden 2*). The game has a crazily convoluted level structure/scoring mechanism/plot, whereby almost the entire game takes place in a training environment ('VIRTUAL PRACTICE BY SIMURATER FROM NOW'), and the missions are numbered incomprehensibly, starting with Mission 1, then Mission 5, and then in multiples of five in normal or backwards order depending on how you perform in each one (so your sequence could go 1, 5, 20, 40, 35, for example). Regardless of the numbering, though, there only seem to be ten actual different levels, and the game loops round them, not ending until you earn (via complex scoring objectives) and defeat the two well-hidden 'Real Battle' stages. Unusually for a coin-op, there's also an unlockable bonus mode, the Special Game, which is more or less a boss rush through short versions of all the stages in order.

PLAY IT NOW ON: MAME



» In *Jet*, you can actually play as the 'Miclus' bonus-point dragon-pig thing, with the power-up Fairy (just visible here) acting as your drone fighter

2005
RAIDEN 3 (ARCADE/PS2/PC)

After a gap of 11 years from the last 'classic-style' *Raiden*, the original formula finally made a welcome return last year in the shape of the inaccurately titled *Raiden 3*. It's a wonderful game that takes the series right back to its roots (just one kind of ship, three primary weapons, three missile types) while also adding lots of excellent new features (like the mental 'Double' mode, where you play a two-player game on your own using the two analogue sticks on the PS2 joypad to control the two ships simultaneously, with the shoulder buttons taking care of shooting and bombing). Just as *Raiden DX* was the finest vertical shmup of the PSOne 1 generation, so *Raiden 3* is the best of this generation. Unusually and happily, it's due for a PAL release – on a budget label, no less – round about the time you're reading this, so check the review in Review Gamer to make sure they haven't cocked up the translation with a 50Hz bordered version or something, and then get down to the shops. You won't regret it.

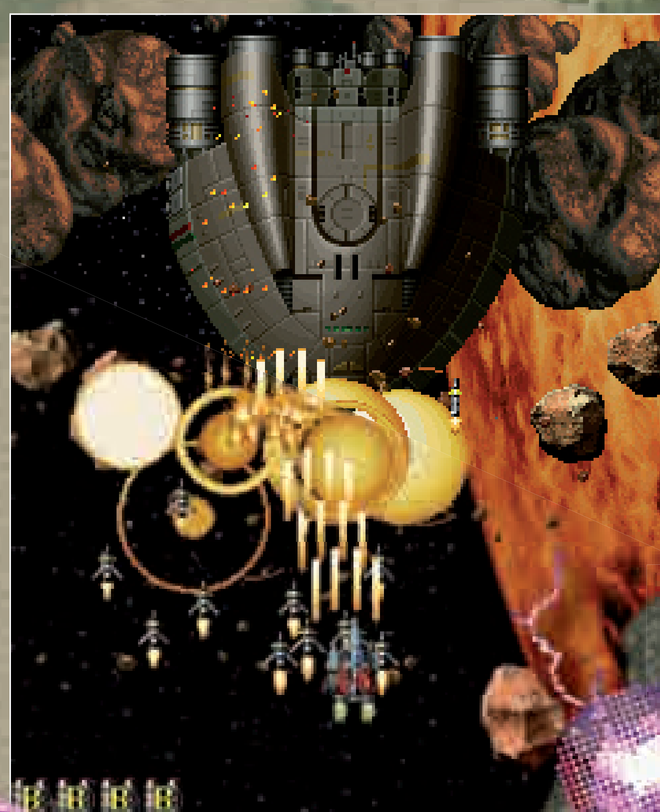
PLAY IT NOW ON: The PS2. There's also now a conversion for Windows PCs, released only in Japan in early 2006



» For all the *Raiden* fans out there, the majestic *Raiden 3* is like finally coming home.

I VIPE THE VINDOWS

Viewers confused by the very different styles of the 'normal' *Raiden* games and the *Raiden Fighters* titles might find themselves enlightened by a look at *Viper Phase 1*. Released by Seibu in 1995 (halfway between *Raiden 2* and *Raiden Fighters*), *VP1* was a coin-op shooter never converted to home formats that provides evidence of the missing link between the two branches of the *Raiden* family tree (if you'll forgive the mixed metaphor). An eight-stage shmup set solely in space (whereas the *Raiden Fighters* games are all on land, and the original *Raiden*s are a mixture of both), *VP1* puts you in the 'Judge Spear' ship that appears in *Raiden Fighters*, and much of the weaponry in the *RF* games is lifted directly from VP1. Perhaps the most telling connection, though, is that in *Raiden DX* on the PSOne you can unlock the *Viper* soundtrack as an extra, and have it playing during the game instead of the normal *Raiden* music.





ACROSS THE POND

TODAY'S GAMERS ARE USED TO LOCALISATION, BUT THE C64'S WORLDWIDE POPULARITY IN THE EIGHTIES SAW DISTINCT ARCADE CONVERSIONS BEING CREATED ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC. THESE WEREN'T NTSC OR PAL FIXES, BUT ENTIRELY DIFFERENT GAMES. BUT WILL WE BE SINGING 'USA! USA!' OR A ROUSING RENDITION OF RULE BRITANNIA BEFORE THE DAY IS DONE? READ ON, DEAR READER, AND FIND OUT…

720 DEGREES

Atari's fondly-remembered skateboarding title would feel at home in the modern era of 'extreme sports' games. The game finds you performing tricks for money, which is then used to buy kit and to enter yourself into tournaments.





UK VERSION

US Gold's UK release of *720 Degrees* was left in Chris Butler's more than capable hands, and he rose to the occasion, squeezing this playable, responsive conversion into one single load. Sure, the graphics are rather blocky, but they manage to resemble the arcade game more than the cartoon-like US version; most importantly, the board's 'feel' and weight is spot-on, and although the arcade version's 'rotate and kick' control method has been dispensed with, the game's still very tough. A great start for the UK.



US VERSION

More advanced loading systems don't necessarily result in superior games: this disk-based effort has a painful multi-load, even requiring a separate load to access the map! Where the extra memory's used, we have no idea – outside of competitions, this version is almost silent, and although the sprites are more cheery than their UK counterparts, the game's scrolling is often so wobbly that it makes you want to vomit. Still, keeping down your lunch adds a much-needed challenge to the extremely easy gameplay…

AFTER BURNER

Sega's adrenaline-pumping arcade game has as much to do with flight simulation as *OutRun* has to do with realistic driving; instead, it's a frenetic shoot-'em-up – great in short bursts, and with mouth-watering 3-Dimensional graphics.





UK VERSION

Here's what the UK conversion of *After Burner* has in common with its arcade parent: you fly a plane, and you shoot other planes. With this being the original version's core gameplay element, 'so far, so good', right? Unfortunately, the 3D effect and other graphics (such as the wildly flickering main sprite) are so laughably bad that it's nigh-on impossible to tell what's going on at any given moment. This is just the type of game that gets sent to the 'bad place' when it dies and deservedly so, it really is utter garbage.



US VERSION

Feeling a little like '*After Burner* Lite', the US version sacrifices terrain detail and enemy numbers in favour of speed. But this is not in vain, because the result is the closest the C64 comes to matching the arcade game – even Elite's graphically superior *First Strike* lacks this game's frantic, non-stop gameplay. As with the European version, the multi-load makes for a slightly fragmented game, but at least Blum and Stubbington's effort plays like its arcade parent, even including the refuelling and canyon levels.



IKARI WARRIORS

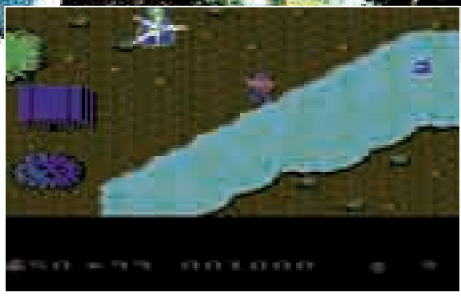
Akin to a thinking-man's *Commando*, this vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up requires a considered, stealthy approach. Neat touches include a simultaneous two-player mode, various weapons upgrades and the ability to drive tanks.





UK VERSION

The astonishing (for the time) 18-month gestation of the UK version of *Ikari Warriors* meant the game was initially met with derision, especially upon seeing the decidedly workmanlike graphics. However, it took little time playing the game to realise that this was a top-notch conversion, perhaps even surpassing the arcade original in terms of playability. With the original's features present and correct, including swarms of soldiers, a simultaneous two-player option and drivable tanks, this is the definitive 8-bit *Commando*-style shooter.



US VERSION

From a game that took 18 months to one that looks like it was cobbled together in 18 minutes – in S.E.U.C.K. Ignore the weedy tune, sparse spot effects and ineffectual push-scrolling, and you'll still wonder why half the original's features and maps are missing (along with the simultaneous two-player mode), why enemies and projectiles disappear at random, why the graphics are so terrible, why the mission takes so little time to complete, and, ultimately, why you loaded the game in the first place.

STREET FIGHTER

The first in the popular series of one-on-one fighting games. A combination of well-defined, unique characters and 'hidden' special moves elevated *Street Fighter* above the competition and provided the blueprint for many subsequent games in the genre.





UK VERSION

From first impressions of this game, you might think you'd loaded Lego *Street Fighter* by mistake, such is the chunkiness of the sprites. Gameplay is sorely lacking, too, suffering from 'unbeatable move syndrome' (rapid leg sweeps to win every round, fact fans!); most of the challenge comes from trying to stop the searing pain in your eyes as you try to keep tabs on the fighters, who suffer from 'the judders' and a distinct lack of animation frames.



US VERSION

Although it doesn't look much like its arcade parent, the US *Street Fighter* conversion at least avoids any chunk-o-vision problems, instead aping a console game. The neatly defined sprites and colourful backgrounds work well, although there's no scrolling and the 'bouncing' of the fighters as they move looks extremely comical. Controls are a little unresponsive, but the game is playable enough, and as it didn't blow up our computer, it pretty much beats the UK version by default.



AN INTERVIEW WITH STE RUDDY

Stephen 'Ste' Ruddy programmed the UK conversion of *Bionic Commando* and worked on both sides of the US/UK arcade conversions phenomenon. "Software Creations cultivated a good relationship with Taito of America following on from them publishing the Software Creations conversion of *Bubble Bobble* in the USA," he says, adding that this led to plenty of NES work for the company. As for multiple C64 versions of the same game, Ste reckons this was partly down to hardware issues: "The extra frame-time you got on PAL gave you a chance to do more, and the UK was cassette-focussed, so some US imports were butchered in the UK to get them on tape." Rather than wreck existing games, it often made sense to create something new.

The C64's reliance on cassettes in the UK played a part in Ste's work on *Bionic Commando*: "After playing the arcade machine, it was obvious the game had to be a multi-load. Because tape-loading was slow, we kept the number of loads to a minimum, putting two levels in each, apart from the stand-alone third level, which was large and had big animating robots in the background." The biggest challenge was implementing the bionic arm: "That was the defining component of the arcade machine. A big line of spites extending from the main character – without flickering – was not C64 friendly, but we nonetheless handled it using a software sprite system."



ACROSS THE POND

BIONIC COMMANDO

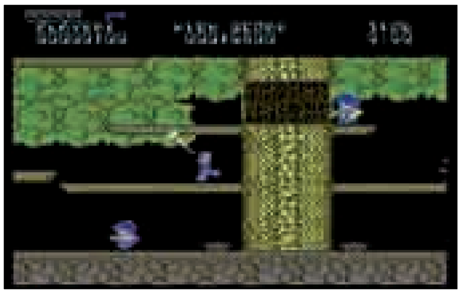
Capcom's tricky but addictive platform game would be long forgotten if it wasn't for the bionic-arm element, which enables your character to swing around the levels like Spider-Man (if Spider-Man used an extendable metal arm instead of webbing, that is…)





UK VERSION

It might not visually match the arcade game, but this *Bionic Commando* conversion sounds great (thanks to Tim Follin's musical talents) and is a joy to play. The 'feel' of the bionic arm is spot-on, and you can use inertia to catapult your character across divides. Sure, the game is hard going at times, but although you may come close to smashing your joystick to pieces upon failing yet again to complete level 4, you'll likely come back for just 'one more go'.



US VERSION

Unfortunately, the team behind this conversion must have had a thinking process that went something like: 1) Note down all the important elements of the arcade version; 2) Wreck unique feature – 'extendable metal arm' – by making it too short and making it awkward to use; 3) Wreck everything else. The graphics are poor, the tune is weak, and many of the arcade game's features are missing. On the plus side… well, it's marginally better than *Bionic Granny*.

CABAL

A sort of pseudo-3D mix of *Space Invaders* and *Operation Wolf*, *Cabal* finds you controlling a lone commando, fending off enemy attacks. Power-ups provide additional firepower for destroying enemies and scenery, and walls offer temporary protection.





UK VERSION

Although it lacks the coin-op's simultaneous two-player mode and the bizarre little dance-cum-victory-run that the commando does upon completing each level, everything else has been crammed into this conversion. It's not perfect – the sound effects are sparse, and the backgrounds are occasionally iffy – but the game is great fun and becomes frantic on later levels. And although the gunfire sounds like a mad bongo player, this is, frankly, a major improvement over the sound effect used for the US version.



US VERSION

At a glance, this looks like a pretty tasty recreation of the arcade game, with well-defined characters and colourful backgrounds. Playing the game is a different story, though. The irritating gunfire sound effect (strangely reminiscent of a 3:4 drum rhythm), annoying 'invisible bullet syndrome', and a lack of frenetic gameplay (due to a general shortage of on-screen foes) result in the realisation that the game is mostly gloss and rather nasty underneath, like a tasty chocolate bar filled with lard.



AN INTERVIEW WITH DARRIN STUBBINGTON

Darrin Stubbington is well known in the games industry, having worked for the likes of Midway and Acclaim, but his career began on the C64, converting Sega coin-ops.

"I came to the US to do PAL-NTSC conversions, but when we came to *After Burner*, the existing version was dire, so we redid it," says Darrin. "At the time, the capabilities of coin-ops were beyond what the C64 could handle, so we had to compromise, retaining the most important essence of the games and recreating this as best as possible with what the C64 had to offer." Darrin remembers the *After Burner* coin-op being particularly graphically intense, with many craft flying at you at once: "For the C64, we had to reduce the number of enemies and the amount of terrain detail."

Darrin reckons different coin-op conversions appeared on both sides of the Atlantic largely due to different perceptions of what made a great game, and from his perspective, there wasn't a belief that results were superior in the US or Europe: "Let's face it: a great game is a great game, but a stinker can be recognised by anybody! Generally, multiple versions also depended on a willingness to invest by publishers. Furthermore, games in the USA at the time were all disk-based, but cassette-based games were still required in the UK, and this made for some natural differences."



RAMPAGE

This appropriately named Bally Midway game finds you taking control of a trio of unfortunate people who'd been mutated into monsters. Your aim is to wreak havoc, demolish buildings, eat people, and avoid the army's onslaught.





UK VERSION

Surprisingly regarded as a classic, we've always thought *Rampage*'s immediacy was but a thin veil camouflaging a game of abject tedium. Sadly, this conversion makes the going even more wretched, offering finicky controls, sluggish gameplay and a smattering of annoying bugs (for example, eating people doesn't replenish your energy). The computer controls the other monsters when human players aren't present – a nice touch, until you realise the computer players are idiots, rarely smashing buildings, but all-too-fond of smashing you.



US VERSION

Poor ol' George the giant monkey looks like he's been repeatedly smashed in the face with an ugly stick, and the levels loop too rapidly, but this version of *Rampage* gets one thing right: it's actually quite a lot of fun, which is largely down to the game being much faster than the sluggish European version. Also, eating people actually replenishes your energy, as it should, thereby providing a reason for munching on the populace – other than out of spite for their hatred of hyperactive outsized monsters. A deserved winner.

JACKAL

Superficially similar to *Ikari Warriors*, *Jackal* finds you commanding a vehicle – an armed to the teeth jeep – rather than a lone soldier. In each level, you rescue POWs, transfer them to helicopter dust-off locations and battle an end-of-level boss.





UK VERSION

One of the more forgetful arcade games out there led to – and this will come as a shock – a thoroughly forgetful home conversion. Luckily, the game is slightly preferable to repeatedly smashing yourself in the face with a C64 – but only just. For every good element (dispensing with the arcade game's upwards-only main weapon for true multi-directional firepower), there's a really bad one (the maddening difficulty level; preserving the arcade game's belief that a single bullet can cause a jeep to explode). In short: avoid.



US VERSION

It would take a very special effort for the US version of *Jackal* to be as bad as the European one; thankfully, creator Mike Hutchinson avoids a similarly catastrophic conversion, largely by toning down the difficulty. The game's not without problems – this version retains the arcade counterpart's annoying vertically-oriented main weapon, and bullets have a nasty tendency to appear and disappear at random – but the game at least verges on 'fun' and won't make you hurl your C64 out of the window.

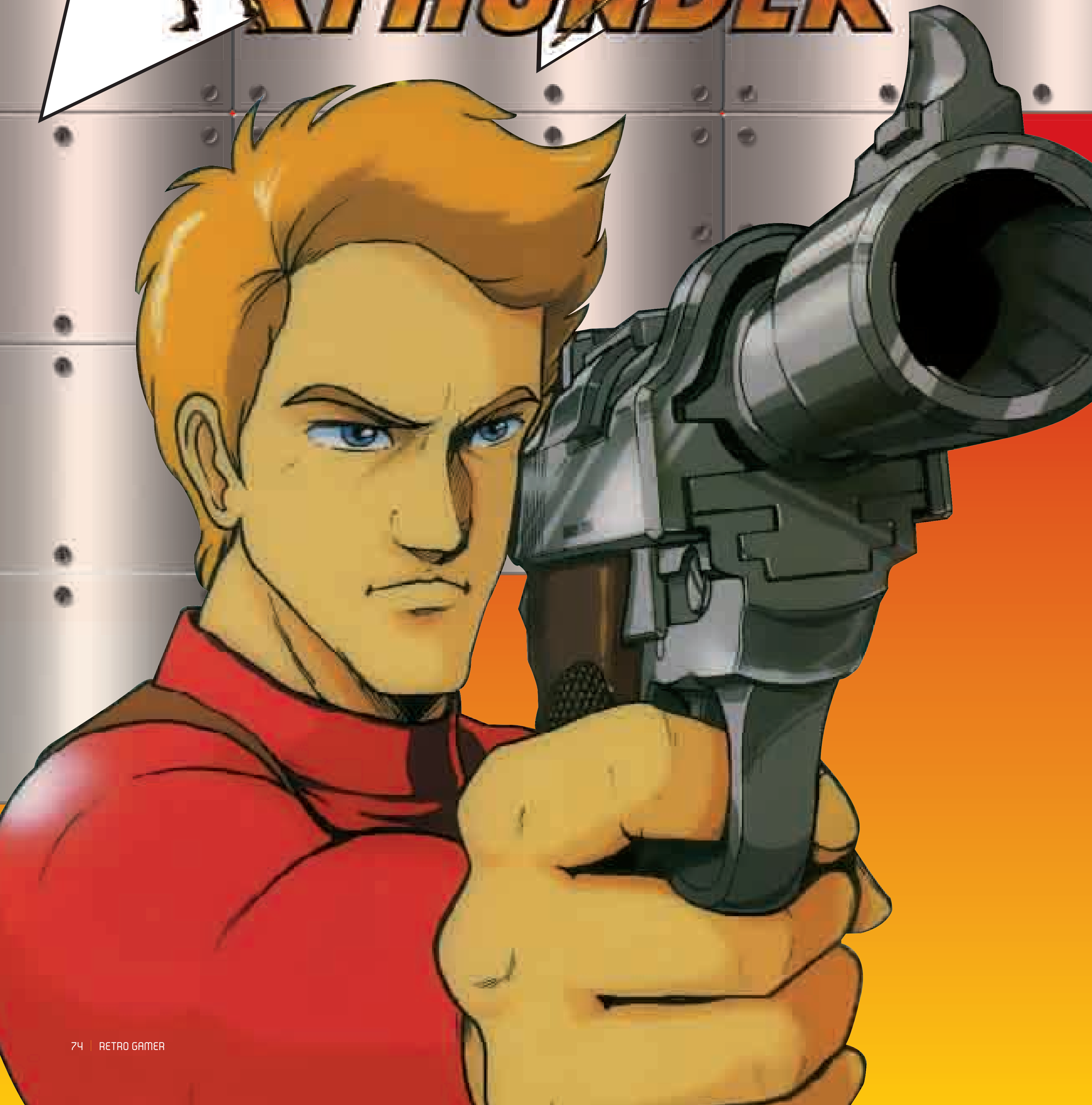
CONCLUSION

And so we reach the end of our battle of the titans, with both sides putting in a good showing. In terms of sheer quality, the UK arguably wins out with two classic entries (*Ikari Warriors* and *Bionic Commando*), while the US has to make do with a decent conversion of *After Burner* and the knowledge that most of its victories occurred due to the UK conversions being so utterly disastrous. Still, totting up the points using our entirely just and fair one-point-per-win system, we find that it's four-all, and so everyone's a winner (apart from anyone who paid for the US version of *Ikari Warriors* or the European conversion of *After Burner*, clearly).

There's a moral in there somewhere and *Retro Gamer* hopes you've all learned something from this encouraging and life-affirming conclusion. Now, however, we're off for another game of *Ikari Warriors* – the European version, naturally.



THE EVOLUTION OF ROLLING THUNDER





» It's not all leaping up and down on platforms you know. Even the best agent has to climb a few stairs every now and again; although these steps are far more dangerous than most

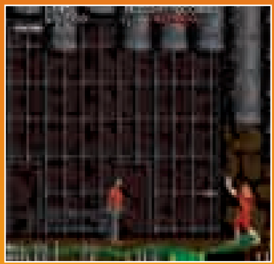


» You'll often be attacked from above by bomb-wielding enemies. Best to either tread carefully, or (and this is much more fun) jump up there and shoot the hell out of them

NAMCO'S ROLLING THUNDER WAS A HUGELY INFLUENTIAL COIN-OP RELEASE THAT SET THE STANDARD FOR A DECADE OF TITLES TO COME. OFTEN IMITATED, BUT RARELY EQUALLED, ROLLING THUNDER WAS A LEAP FORWARD IN GRAPHICS, PLAYABILITY AND GAME DYNAMICS THAT SET ARCADES ON FIRE BACK IN THE MID-EIGHTIES. ROBERT MELLOR GOES DEEP UNDERCOVER TO TRACE THE HISTORY OF THIS LEGENDARY SERIES, FROM THE ORIGINAL COIN-OP TO ITS SEQUELS AND CONVERSIONS, ALONG WITH A HOST OF TITLES THAT CAME ABOUT DIRECTLY BECAUSE OF THE IMPACT OF THIS LARGELY UNSUNG HERO OF THE ARCADE.

Originally based on a Manga from the Far East, *Rolling Thunder* was created by Namco in 1986 on its System 86 hardware and distributed the following year in cabinets manufactured by Atari. Set sometime in the Sixties in New York City, the game has a retro *James Bond* feel to it and puts players in control of a secret agent known as Albatross. A member of the World Criminal Police Organization and operative on the *Rolling Thunder* mission, Albatross' task is to rescue fellow agent Leila Blitz – who has been taken captive by the ruthless terrorist organisation known as Geldra, a race of cyborg aliens led by the sinister Maboo. Starting out in a heavily populated enemy stronghold, players have to advance through a total of ten levels comprising warehouses, secret underground caves and computer operations rooms, battling gun and explosive-wielding henchmen known as 'Maskers', vicious panthers, giant bats, deformed mutants and ultimately, Maboo himself. Armed only with his Walther P38, a limited supply of ammunition and an extremely delicate energy bar, players need fast thinking, quick reaction and careful planning to help Albatross advance through all ten treacherous levels.

While not often mentioned in the same breath as similar classics of the era, such as Sega's 1987 martial arts extravaganza *Shinobi*, or Data East's 1988 movie-licence *Robocop*, Namco's *Rolling Thunder* surely ranks as one of the most important and influential coin-ops of all time. Drawing from earlier primitive releases of a similar nature, such as Taito's seminal *Elevator Action* from 1983, Namco's game revolutionised the style, look and feel of the side-scrolling shoot-'em-up and set the standard in the genre for the next decade. Rather than a mindless 'blast everything in sight' experience, *Rolling Thunder* is an



» These panthers can be deadly and will quickly rob you of your precious energy

"STARTING OUT IN A HEAVILY POPULATED ENEMY STRONGHOLD, PLAYERS HAVE TO ADVANCE THROUGH A TOTAL OF TEN LEVELS COMPRISING WAREHOUSES, SECRET UNDERGROUND CAVES AND COMPUTER ROOMS"

THE EVOLUTION OF

ROLLING THUNDER

"IT BECAME AN OBSCURE SUCCESS WITH PUNTERS, ALTHOUGH ITS INFLUENCE ON THE NEXT YEARS OF SIMILAR TITLES IS WHAT IT WILL BE MOST REMEMBERED FOR"

intelligent game that requires extensive logic and pattern-learning to advance through it, not to mention conservation of ammunition due to the limited supply of bullets given to the player at the start of each round. Extra ammo and even a machine gun power-up can be picked up by venturing into one of the many doors situated around each level, which can also be used to hide from enemies and plan sneak attacks. But even with these present, bullets prove scarce and running out means only being able to fire a single shot at a time and frequently being left defenceless at the mercy of the multitude of adversaries that engulf the screen. The game's intense difficulty becomes even more apparent with the deceptively generous energy bar, which diminishes by half if contact with a bad guy is made, and disappears completely if Albatross gets tagged by a rogue bullet or enemy bomb. Another ingenious element of gameplay implemented by Namco is the use of multiple platforms that the player can gracefully ascend to or jump down from, along with a non-linear approach to later levels that deviates from the generic left-to-right field of play advancement. Presentation, meanwhile, is fabulous with atmospheric sound that features piercing gunshots and the odd bit of speech, with simply stunning graphics and highly realistic character animation that, in places, can actually be seen as a precursor to the motion-capture movement employed on the legendary Jordan Mechner's *Prince Of Persia*. This is made all the more impressive when taking into account the primitive nature of the hardware that runs the game – a similar set-up to the ones used for comparatively simple titles such as *Sky Kid Deluxe* and *Hopping Mappy*. Gameplay itself is of a satisfactory level, although the often-sticky controls and the four-way joystick (that eliminates the possibility of diagonal movement) are a definite detractor. Despite the unforgiving nature of the game and the at-times infuriating difficulty level (which is even more aggressive on the second, upgraded version of the title), a continue option is there to make matters slightly more bearable, along with the ability to start on any of the first five stages. Offering up a substantial challenge, the game proves incredibly addictive and, regardless of the second



» You've got the machine gun so now you can really hurt Geldra. Don't shoot till you see the blacks of their eyes

wave of levels being replicas of the first with cosmetic enhancements that alter playing dynamics, the title also scores highly in terms of longevity. Even though many would have been initially put off by the game's cruel learning curve, passers-by could not help but be drawn in by *Rolling Thunder*'s slick appearance and the machine became what one might term an obscure success with punters, although its influence on the next several years of similar genre titles is what it will be most remembered for.

CONVERSIONS

Following a modestly successful run in arcades around the world, US Gold picked up conversion rights and Tiertex ported the game for release on all major home computers in 1988. The C64 version is sluggish and blocky, yet a very playable and satisfactory effort, while the Amstrad features colourful in-game graphics and the Spectrum contains its characteristically faithful sprites and line-drawn backgrounds. The Amiga and Atari ST translations, meanwhile, are a relative disappointment when taking into account that near-perfect conversions could have been achieved on such powerful machines. The Amiga version was US Gold's first foray into the 16-bit Commodore market, and its lacklustre execution is perhaps the reason why both it and the Atari ST port were never re-issued on the Kixx budget label, as were the 8-bit versions. Predictably, all releases feature the ever-obligatory and annoying border around the playing area.

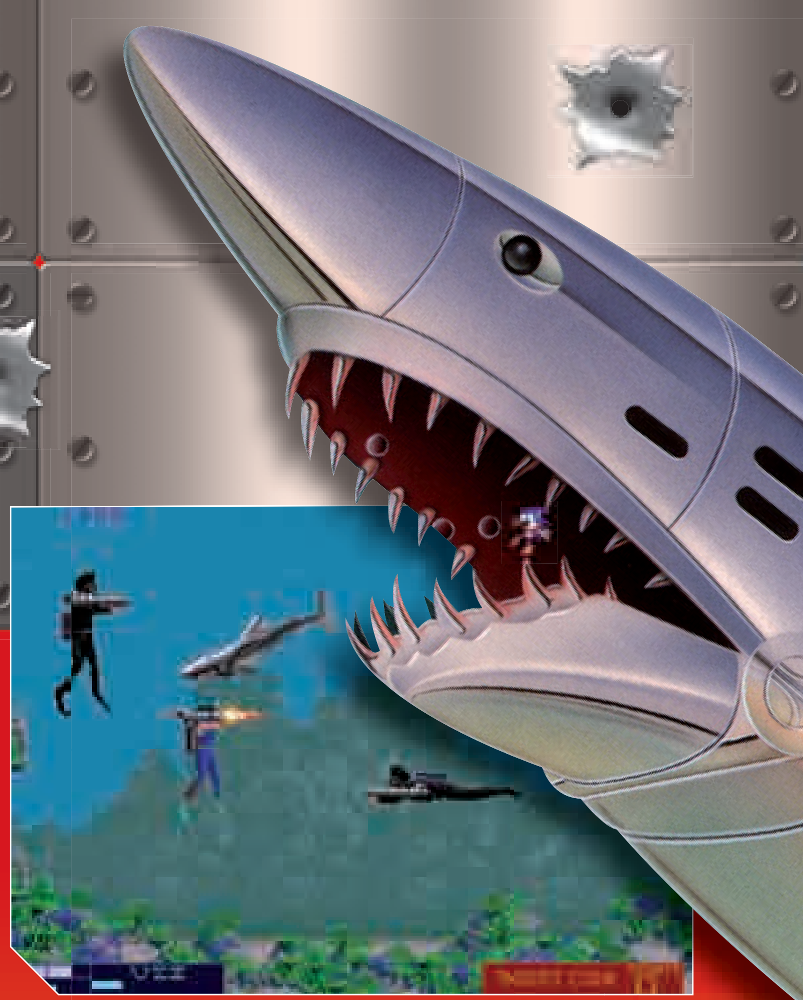
ELEVATING INFLUENCE

While *Rolling Thunder* itself went on to become one of the most copied and influential games in coin-operated history, it's interesting to look back and consider the game that the Namco classic borrowed from in the first place. Released by Taito in 1983, *Elevator Action* is a typically simplistic yet highly enjoyable game from the era that the majority of platform shooters have their genesis in. Abseiling onto the roof of a high-rise skyscraper, players must take control of a super-sleuth and confront a succession of vertically scrolling levels as they attempt to descend through the building, take out the bad guys and make it out alive. Employing several revolutionary concepts such as the use of escalators, rooms containing valuable items and, of course, elevators, the game introduced strategic and intelligent play to the genre, paving the way for many titles that came after it.



» The original *Elevator Action* in all its glory, the sequel is even better





» A spoof name, robotic sharks, thrilling underwater sequences that are full of action and loads of bad guys to plug. Atari's *ThunderJaws* has it all…

Several consoles also received conversions of *Rolling Thunder*, with a version for the Atari Lynx and a pleasant Nintendo NES port from Tengen in 1988, which implemented a password system and featured strikingly daring box art for the family-friendly console. An arcade-perfect release finally came to home systems in the Nineties when the game was included on the Sony PlayStation's Namco Museum Encore Collection – sadly, a Japan-only exclusive.

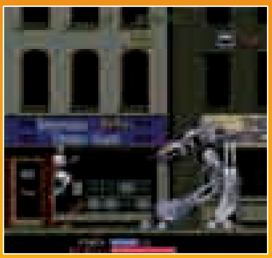
THUNDERJAWS

Just as in 1983 the *James Bond* franchise was gifted with two separate releases, one licensed and one not; the original *Rolling Thunder* received two coin-op sequels in 1990, the first of which was the semi-official *ThunderJaws* from Atari. Manufactured on their own brand of Duel 68000 hardware, the Atari game contains notable parallels to several *Bond* films itself, most recognizably the aquatic-set *Thunderball* along with elements of other 007 escapades such as *Octopussy*. With the WCPO and Agent Albatross nowhere in sight, players take control of two deep-sea diving operatives with the task of infiltrating the devious Madame Q's underwater lair and halting her plans for world domination, rescuing the odd hostage along the way and saving them from certain death at the hands of brutal genetic experiments. Starting off with a harpoon and an unlimited supply of ammunition, players face waves of enemies that range from sinister henchmen and organic ocean terrors to robotic sharks and huge end-of-level guardians. All this ensues in an alternating mix of levels that take place submerged in the depths of the sea and also on dry land in Madame Q's many treacherous strongholds, ultimately leading to the final confrontation with the insidious perpetrator herself.

Featuring excellent presentation that comprises colourful graphics, informative cutscenes, a generous helping of speech and atmospheric music, *ThunderJaws* proves to be an extremely fun game to play, yet it ultimately falls short of the magnificent heights achieved by its predecessor. The decision by Atari to implement two playing styles – one underwater, with the other more closely related to the traditional *Rolling Thunder* platform approach – was indeed a brave one, and while it works to a certain extent by adding some variety to the title, it also breaks play up and makes the game seem rather fragmented. Playability and freedom of movement are excellent on the aquatic-based levels, but the side-scrolling platform sections are a long way from the greatness of the original game, containing sluggish play, jerky scrolling and simplistic sprite animation. The inclusion of the ability to shoot diagonally is a positive addition to the game, as is the setting of the difficulty and subsequent learning curve, but when compared to the intelligent and slick style of *Rolling Thunder* the overall impression of the machine, as a whole, is a definite regression. On the plus side, the title has a very jovial feel to it, thanks mainly to the California surfer accents of the player characters, while there

SUDDEN IMPACT

Almost immediately after the release of the original *Rolling Thunder*, the majority of arcade game manufacturers, from minor companies to the major players, followed Namco's lead and proceeded to produce their own side-scrolling shoot-'em-up clones. The impact of *Rolling Thunder*, despite its admittedly obscure nature, was readily evident as wave after wave of similar genre titles flooded the market in the late Eighties. Sega scored a double-hit with the immensely popular *Shinobi* and its slick sequel *Shadow Dancer* – essentially martial arts versions of *Rolling Thunder*. Film licences took advantage of the format as well, with Data East's majestic Robocop coin-op proving unbelievably popular in arcades the world over, while even less obvious titles such as Atari's translation of the Tim Burton-helmed *Batman* movie borrowed heavily from Namco's blueprint for scrolling platform-based action.



» "Your move creep!" *Robocop* lays down the law in this superb arcade game

ROLLING THUNDER

COMING FULL CIRCLE



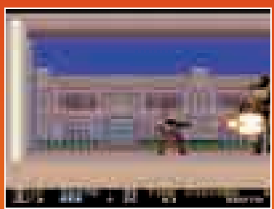
» It certainly takes liberties with the franchise (purple aliens anyone?) but Konami's *Aliens* was superb fun



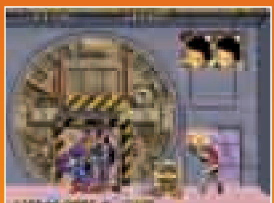
» Taito's *Elevator Action Returns* is now available on *Taito Legends 2*. Buy it now you crazy fools, it's amazing

Even with the decade that spawned it well and truly over, the ripple effect that *Rolling Thunder* had on the industry continued well into the Nineties, with an unrelenting succession of genre titles from other companies continuing to populate arcades. Konami were the undisputed masters of the side-scrolling action game during the era, so it's no surprise that a fair few of its excellent releases owe a debt of gratitude to the Namco chestnut, from the four-player wild west extravaganza known as *Sunset Riders* to its decidedly late, yet undeniably magnificent, licence of the 1986 film *Aliens*. Then, nearly a decade after its inception, *Rolling Thunder*'s influence came full circle when Taito released *Elevator Action Returns*, a sequel to the 1983 game that had inspired the Namco title in the first place. Featuring gorgeous graphics, a wonderful sound system and infinitely slicker play to the original *Elevator Action*, this was a fitting way to cap a decade of superb run-'n'-gun coin-eaters.

> "ROLLING THUNDER 2 IS ONE OF THE BEST SEQUELS EVER PRODUCED IN THE VIDEOGAME ARENA AND, WHILE NOT AS INFLUENTIAL AS THE GAME THAT PRECEDED IT, IS ARGUABLY THE DEFINITIVE ENTRY IN THE SERIES"



» You'll need all the firepower you can muster to destroy this robotic foe



» The door next to you houses extra ammo; very handy with these incoming agents…



is a selection of additional weapons to pick up throughout the levels including, bizarrely, an underwater flame-thrower. Most of all, the addition of the two-player option adds appeal to gameplay and gives the sequel an advantage in the co-operative play aspect. The levels are well designed despite taking a more cartoon-ish approach than the original instalment, although the inclusion of the large computer screen makes a nice throwback to a scene from *Rolling Thunder*. The diving sections are particularly impressive with scenarios ranging from clear tropical waters to murky, toxic-waste polluted depths. Indeed, the sequences where the characters are submerged prove to be the most enjoyable, and it's only the slightly laborious platform sections that let *ThunderJaws* down meaning that, as a result, it works well enough as a stand-alone title but not too impressively as a sequel to one of the greatest side-scrolling run-'n'-gun titles to ever be released.

CONVERSIONS

Home versions of *ThunderJaws* were released in 1991 by Domark and Tengen, with the Commodore 64, Sinclair Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST and Commodore Amiga all receiving their own port. All of these are functional enough conversions of Atari's coin-op, but both the flaws inherent in the original and the unsurprising use of yet another encompassing border cramping the playing area ultimately weaken them. The Amiga version, despite a crippling six-month development and forcibly downsized sprites, ultimately fares the best with faithful sound and graphics and the inclusion of all 13 levels as seen on the arcade machine.

ROLLING THUNDER 2

While Atari was busy concocting its own spin-off to the game it had distributed three years earlier, Namco was hard at work on the true sequel to *Rolling Thunder*, which it released that same year on its System 2 hardware. A Japanese market exclusive, the title sees the return of the hero of the first game, Albatross, and (rather confusingly) moves the action forward to the Nineties. With satellites disappearing from orbit and the world being thrown into chaos, the WCPO uncovers a plot by Geldra to take over the world. Thought destroyed after the events of the original *Rolling Thunder* mission, the sinister terrorist organisation has seemingly risen from the ashes and now finds itself controlled by Gimdo – Maboo's right hand man. Turning once again to Albatross and his partner in the field, Agent Leila, the *Rolling Thunder* team is once again dispatched to stop Gimdo and put an end to Geldra once and for all.

Where Atari stumbled with *ThunderJaws*, Namco succeeded with *Rolling Thunder 2* by sticking to the same format as the classic original and enhancing the overall experience in a variety of manners. The most noticeable addition is the inclusion of the simultaneous two-player option, with player one taking on the role of Leila and player two assuming control of the more familiar Albatross. In addition to that are a total of ten unique and superbly designed rounds spanning the globe. Exchanging the gritty scenarios of the original for a selection of infinitely more glamorous locations, the game takes players to such diverse scenarios as a tropical Geldra stronghold, a futuristic tube system and the pyramids of Egypt. On top of this, visuals are strengthened by the use of multi-layer parallax scrolling and hardware-scaling to produce some impressive graphical effects, not unlike those seen on Namco's 1989 game *Burning Force* – also on System 2 hardware. Gameplay also receives a major upgrade, resolving the issue of the sticky controls of the original while also trading off the realistic character animation for increased playing speed and a smoother feel. Like its predecessor, *Rolling Thunder 2* is an extremely difficult game, but the learning curve is set at an appropriate level with a more generous energy meter that doesn't deplete merely for coming into contact with an enemy. Levels have an increased multi-directional feel to them, making the title feel even less linear than the original, while co-operative play adds an extra dimension to the game – most notably the ability to share power-ups, ammunition and attack enemies strategically as a team. Perhaps most impressive, however, is the game's sound: not only does it feature some especially apt FX, but it also includes one of the most complex and structured soundtracks ever featured in a videogame, with many bass-heavy, adrenaline-pumping original compositions that incorporate recurring themes and reprises of melodies from the original game at various junctures. Indeed, so popular was the score that it was released on CD in the Nineties as part of the *Namco Game Sound Express Volume 5*.

Overall, *Rolling Thunder 2* is one of the best sequels ever produced in the videogame arena and, while not as influential as the game that preceded it, is arguably the definitive entry in the series.

CONVERSIONS

Alarmingly, this superlative sequel was only converted to one home platform when



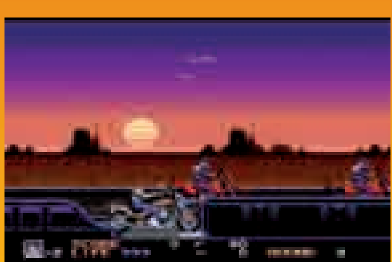


» Rolling Thunder 3 may not have been an arcade game, but that didn't stop it from being a superb blaster. Mega Drive owners never had it so good…



» The lack of a second player is rather disappointing but Namco included plenty of cool extras in the Mega Drive exclusive Rolling Thunder 3 to make up for it. Finally being able to shoot diagonally was a typical example

Namco released it for the Sega Mega Drive in 1992. Thankfully, one port was all that was needed, as the 16-bit Sega version is absolutely stellar and not only an extremely successful translation of the arcade original but also an improvement on it in many areas. As well as an intuitive password system, an option to listen to the soundtrack in isolation and the ability to actually select which character to play as in a briefing room screen, presentation is fantastic with the implementation of gorgeous inter-level cutscenes that feature Manga-style graphics – a wonderful reference to the origin of the original game. Along with that are three extra levels, bonus weapon power-ups with flamethrowers and laser canons joining the machine gun present on the coin-op and the inclusion of several end-of-level guardians to match wits with. The two-player option also makes it unscathed and this would unquestionably be the ultimate *Rolling Thunder* game were it not for the fact that the Mega Drive's sound capabilities are unable to completely capture the bombastic nature of the arcade machine's soundtrack. That aside, this is a sterling conversion and one of the greatest run-'n'-gun titles to grace Sega's 16-bit console.

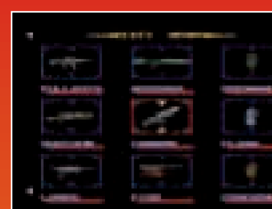


» The thrilling driving sections of Rolling Thunder 3 are a welcome addition to the franchise

ROLLING THUNDER 3

While there have been no further entries into the series of *Rolling Thunder* arcade machines, Namco produced another official sequel on the Sega Mega Drive in 1993 following its immensely successful port of the second title, releasing it to all territories outside Japan. Rather than churning out a straightforward sequel (or even a prequel) Namco opted to make the third instalment a 'Gaiden' – the Japanese term for a story that takes place at exactly the same time as that of a previously released instalment. With both Albatross and Leila engaged in a battle to bring down Gimdo, as documented in *Rolling Thunder 2*, the WCPO turns to Agent Jay to take down Dread, an equally dangerous Geldra superior, and his own charter of inexhaustible henchmen. Waging war against an onslaught of opponents that takes Jay to such locales as Las Vegas, an oil refinery, Easter Island and an undersea base, players have to advance through a multitude of increasingly tough challenges in order to reach the final destination of Dread's hideout and take down the evil commander himself.

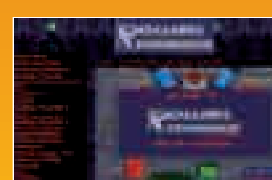
Although it would have been forgivable for Namco to have programmed a by-the-numbers carbon copy of *Rolling Thunder 2*, what it gave us was another incredible game which took the best elements from what had come before it while incorporating many new features and options to make the new title unique and worthwhile. With the only major weakness of this most recent release being the sacrifice of the two-player option, every other aspect of this instalment is enhanced to the max. Starting out with a more appropriate learning curve and a more forgiving level of difficulty, playability is polished with the option to at long last be able to shoot diagonally in an official *Rolling Thunder* game, subsequently taking out enemies on upper levels. On top of this is the welcome addition of a more robust energy bar, allowing multiple hits to be taken before dying, and the fact that play carries on instantly from the point of death, rather than being sent back to a checkpoint or the beginning of the level as seen in the previous games. Improving variety greatly is the ability to choose from and carry more than one weapon at a time, with the game including a knife for close combat situations and a plethora of additional guns, grenades and launchers – one of which can be selected at the start of each level for Jay to use in combat alongside his standard issue .357 Magnum. The stipulation that each secondary weapon can only be used once per game adds another element of strategy to the title, forcing players to choose wisely and allocate specific guns and bombs to the levels in which they will need them the most. As if that wasn't enough, this last entry also borrows from the plethora of *Rolling Thunder* clones on the market by adding an element of variety to the play: the game features several thrilling driving sections that put Jay into some high-speed action, from gargantuan motorbike chases on the highway to jet-ski races on the open sea. To tie everything together presentation is, as with the other games in the series, excellent, including an animated introduction to explain the plot and the whereabouts of Leila and Albatross along with a secret code that can be entered to play as Agent Ellen – a communications officer and Jay's WCPO partner. All this added to a suitable soundtrack and perhaps the slickest gameplay of the saga makes *Rolling Thunder 3* another definitive run-'n'-gun game and a worthy end to a legendary series.



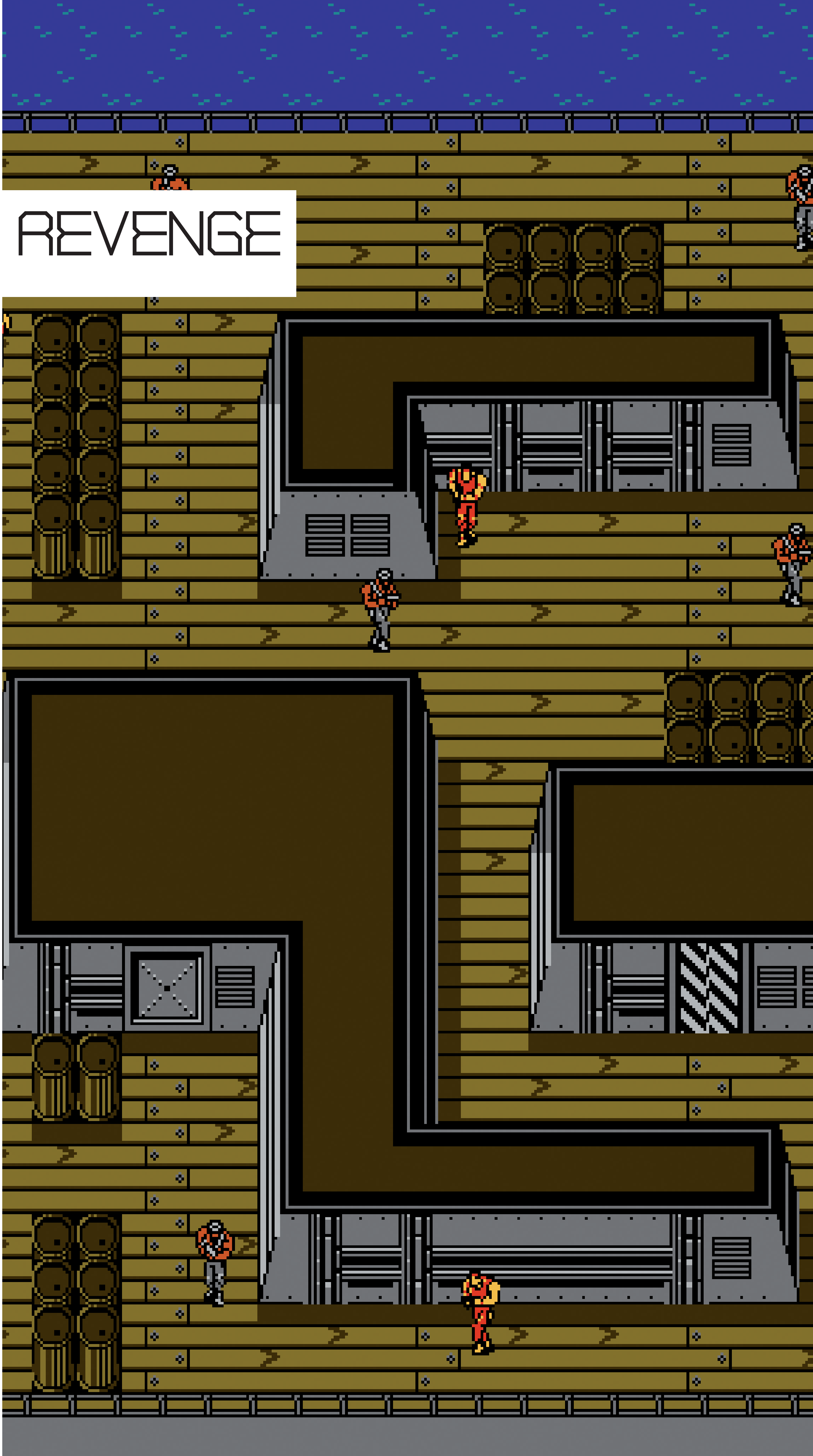
» Decisions, decisions. So many weapons to choose, so little time…

THE LEGEND LIVES ON

Despite the *Rolling Thunder* series having been overlooked by the Internet and the retro-gaming community as a whole, there are still a few pockets of resistance to be found that champion its cause. The best of these is The Rolling Thunder Online Resource, which is maintained by the dedicated Eric Magers and can be reached at http://www.bloody-snake.com/rt_index.html. Here fans of the games can partake in an online community that features a discussion forum, plenty of information on the series, image and MP3 downloads along with Manny Freezy – a fan-fiction that continues the adventures of the WCPO where Namco left off.



» The Rolling Thunder Online Resource in all its glory. Check it out



SNAKE'S REVENGE

THE UNLOVED METAL GEAR



- » **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- » **RELEASED:** 1990
- » **GENRE:** STEALTH ADVENTURE
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** NES
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £6+



HISTORY

With the release of *Metal Gear Solid* on PSOne, and the discovery that Japan had received a different sequel to the West for the original *Metal Gear*, scores of fans developed a baseless hatred for *Snake's Revenge*. Many hadn't even played very far before making the decision, and the unfair criticisms persisted for years. Until recently, when Kojima categorically stated on the *MGS3* bonus DVD that he enjoyed and found *Snake's Revenge* to be faithful to the series. In fact, Kojima only began work on further games in the series because the man behind *SR* asked him to create a "true" sequel. He told him this during an impromptu meeting, and Kojima had never considered it before, but spent that evening devising *Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake* for the MSX. The rest is history.

Snake's Revenge was actually designed as a direct sequel to the original MSX version, as opposed to being a sequel for the butchered NES port. As a result it's even more faithful, because it features: item rewards for stealth kills, increased enemy alert status that carries over several screens, and most importantly of all, actual *Metal Gear* units to destroy (as opposed to a giant computer). It also contained several elements that would be used in later titles: a giant ship filled with Metal Gear units and a directional microphone were featured in *MGS2* – while the combat knife, shotgun, orange camouflage, and jungle enemies that travelled on flying platforms, were all found in *MGS3*.

Despite a few valid criticisms that can be raised (the side scrolling sections are indeed dreadful), it deserves to be listed among other *Metal Gear* games. Without it we might never have had any further series iterations, and how would that affect the Sony empire? Every system it has released has relied on a *Metal Gear* game. Make the connection! That's right readers, for some people, *Snake's Revenge* could be regarded as one of the most important games ever released, since it encouraged the series' growth.



DESERT ISLAND DISKS

WHAT CHERISHED GAMES WOULD YOU TAKE TO THE ISLAND?



DATAFILE

NAME: NICK PELLING

DATE OF BIRTH: "1964-ISH"

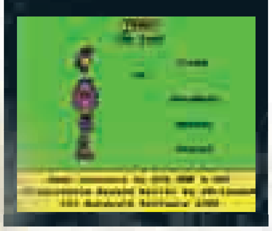
FIRST JOB: 'NEVER TECHNICALLY HAD ONE…'

CURRENTLY: BOSS OF SELF

FAVOURITE FILM: ANYTHING BY RUSS MEYER

YOU MUST PLAY…

Frak!
Memorable for its large, colourful characters and gameplay that moved from sedate to sadistic, *Frak!* was a game with a bit of personality and the first to recognise the offensive potential of the yo-yo. Make sure you play the BBBC version mind. The awkward C64 version was handled by Statesoft rather than Nick: 'We called them The B-Team, because every time we asked for a status report, it was Bad news, boss…



NICK PELLING

HE'S SPENT A QUARTER OF A CENTURY IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY, WORKING ON TITLES AS DIVERSE AS COLOURFUL BBC PLATFORMER FRAK!, THE GROUNDBREAKING 3D POOL AND THE PLAYSTATION VERSION OF DUKE NUKEM. YET ORLANDO M PILCHARD (QC) (A.K.A. NICK PELLING) DOESN'T ACTUALLY LIKE PLAYING GAMES. PAUL DRURY DECIDES TO INVESTIGATE 'THE PELLING PARADOX'…

"I've always liked watching people playing games and seeing what they get from them," offers Nick in his defence. "And I like making them. I've just never really felt the need to play games. I work hard I think, sometimes insanely hard, but I've never played games to relax. I read; listen to music, other things… my games making was informed by those 'other things'".

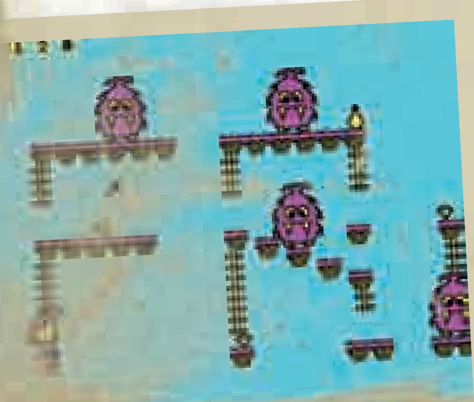
Latterly, this would encompass musical pigs, ancient ciphers and Hungarian madmen, but Nick began his career with more traditional influences. Teaching himself programming on an Acorn Atom, he produced *Invaders* and *Hedgehog*, a spin on *Frogger*, with alphanumeric characters tastefully used to represent the flattened spiky hero. He set up Aardvark Software – "I played *Scrabble* with my Gran and I had a fondness for the word aardvark… it was like your old friend in the dictionary" – and advertised both titles in Your Computer magazine.

Nick sold several hundred copies of his first programming efforts, a creditable achievement for a boy still at school, but it was his third title, *Atom Galaxians*, that caught the eye of Acornsoft and turned a hobby into a career.

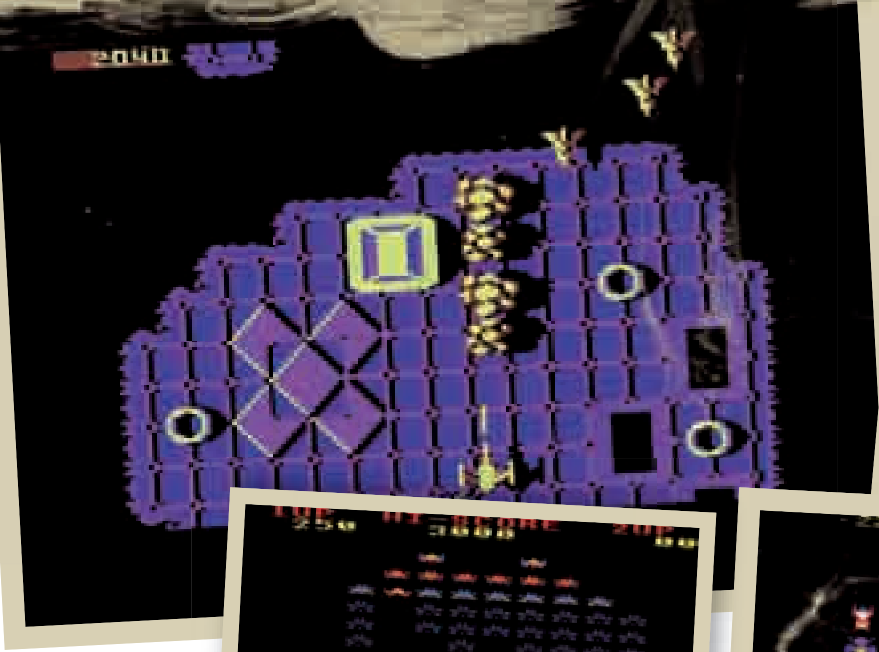
"I had a funny Friday," Nick recalls, enigmatically. "I was convinced someone was trying to get hold of me. The next day, I found Acornsoft had been leaving messages. They invited me up to Cambridge and asked if I could do something for their new machine. I walked away with a BBC Micro under my arm, which must have been one of the first…"

Nick dutifully repaid the company's faith in him with *Arcadians*, a fine *Galaxian* clone and ingratiated himself further with the bosses by tarting up a chess programme begun by a director of Acorn. "Actually, it was complete rubbish," he acknowledges. "A chess programme is a labour of love that can take your life over, not something you knock up in your gap year."

It's a harsh verdict, but then Nick is an accomplished chess player and his talents on the board have taken him to international tournaments. It was at one such event in Norway that he spied a tabletop *Galaga* arcade machine, thought it looked fun and produced *Zalaga* for Aardvark on his return.



» Caveman Trogg was to be given a boomerang and skateboard for *Frak! 2*. Clubs were just so last age…





» **Top left and right:** Scrolling shooter *Firetrack* – another of Nick's games affected by industry machinations





» **Bottom left and right:** Nick opened his BBC micro account with these decent arcade clones

Incorporating varied alien swooping formations and an impressive soundtrack, it was a well-received Beeb blaster, but Nick was tiring of space shooters and arcade knock-offs. It was time for something original. It was time for a caveman with a yo-yo.

"I wanted to do a non-violent game that wasn't about explosions and killing. Something that didn't have a violent bone in its body but still had character and a sense of humour. My old friend Ian Boffin came up with a similar design and we played around with it and ended up with *Frak!*"

Full of big, bold sprites, the game entailed the primitive Trogg bounding between platforms – which spelt out 'FRAK' if you looked closely – dispatching adversaries with his trusty yo-yo. The screen scrolled ever leftwards, forcing desperate leaps of faith and the sadistic inversion of the screen, combined with some flashing and monochrome effects in later levels, made the whole thing damn difficult. Enough to make you swear, in fact.

"The title? That came from a friend of a friend called Sarah who said, 'Frik, Frak, F*ck' when she was angry. I went with 'Frak', and that's what Trogg says when he dies, though every hacker at the time turned it into something rather less subtle."

Nick too had cause to curse, for despite *Frak!* being Aardvark's biggest seller, it was also to be the last from his own software house. The company fell victim to a crash in the UK games market in the mid-Eighties and for several years he left the industry, before re-entering in 1987 with *Firetrack*. Another collaboration with Ian Boffin, this innovative vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up loosely based on *Starforce* sadly qualifies for 'forgotten gem' status, thanks to some half-hearted marketing from publishers Mediagenic, Activision's trading name at the time.

"They took a couple of ads out and then left it. I can't actually remember getting any money from that one. I rather liked it too – the patterns of the aliens. Very mathematical. That's why *Tetris* is the best game of all time. I can only do stuff in its shadow…"

"I'VE NEVER PLAYED GAMES TO RELAX. MY GAMES MAKING WAS INFORMED BY OTHER THINGS…" NICK PELLING

Nick's stoicism undoubtedly helped him through the next two decades riding the ups and downs of the videogame industry roller-coaster. Sometimes his role was as consultant, bringing his coding expertise to projects such as *Mortal Kombat II*, where he provided the compression routines which allowed the Sega Mega Drive to cope with the game's graphical demands. Similarly, he wrote some ingenious video software to rescue the *X-Files* PlayStation licensed game – visually at least…

"They were in trouble, basically. They'd spent a lot of time and money creating beautiful video footage and then realised if you want to run a game on top of that, you lose all the subtle shades of colour. I did a little magic and hey presto, it was looking nice again."

Nick was getting used to the mantle of trouble-shooter. As early as 1987, he was heeding the call of desperate developers. He spent six days without sleep that year getting Electric Dreams' *Dandy* for the C64 out the door and then did some outreach work for troubled youth on Activision's *Ghostbusters 2*.

"They had these poor kids programming the game and they only had the C64 manual. They only really knew about peek and poke and didn't know what half the instructions did. Considering they didn't even know about the X and Y registers, they'd made a pretty decent game. And they were heavily into Depeche Mode. Bless 'em."

Despite being accustomed to bailing out a project in crisis, nothing quite prepared him for the predicament *Bangkok Nights* had found itself in. Disappointingly, the game wasn't a ping-pong sex sim but rather a Thai boxing beat-'em-up in development for System 3. Nick takes up the disturbing tale…

"It was originally called *A Night In Bangkok* and was being coded in FORTH by Andromeda in Hungary. The chap doing the animation had got the main character walking smoothly in his editor, but it developed a limp when put in the game. The programmer just couldn't figure out the bug. He started walking with a limp himself around his desk, trying to empathise with the bug. Then he started limping round the office and then the corridors. One day he limped out the office onto the streets of Budapest and never came back. When they asked me to take it on, I inquired if there was any code. They said, 'Yeah, it's written in Hungarian FORTH and it's driven a programmer mad.' I started from scratch…"

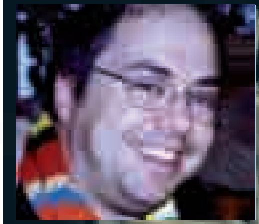
A wise decision, which saw the game achieve 'Sizzler' status in Zzap!64 magazine with Nick's sanity and gait in tact. Suitably emboldened, he drew inspiration for his next project from Sega's arcade hit, *After Burner*. But only the attract mode.

"I never really liked the game," Nick admits. "But it had a nice attract screen with lots of balls spinning round. So I wrote my version of it. John Hare [of Sensible Software fame] was round my flat and said, 'That's really good, you should make a game out of it.' So I thought,

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The pseudonym Nick chose to publish his games under was born during a university careers day, when one of the recruiters took a wild guess at Nick's name. "He guessed Osbert Pilchard and I replied, 'You're close. It's Orlando.' It just stuck."

The reason for adopting the moniker was rather more considered that its origin. "It was anonymity for a purpose," Nick explains. "The press was rabid back then. There was a real media circus, with Imagine, Bruce Everiss, The Daily Mail… every week, they seemed to have a story about some 17-year-old who'd got a Porsche but couldn't even drive yet. It was horrible to read, especially because then, as now, most people working in games don't earn a lot of money. Like in the film business, only a few at the top do well. A few pharaohs and everyone else pushing blocks."



» International Man of Mystery, Mr Pilchard…



» The unreleased *3D Wars*, given away as a demo with Personal Computer Games magazine in 1985



» Nick at the *3D Pool* launch party, also attended by Giant Haystacks

YOU'LL GO BLIND

"It was a decent little game with brilliant music that made the Game Boy sound better than it had any right to," says Nick of *3D Pocket Pool*. He shared coding duties on the project with David Leitch and also ended up handling the PR when publishers Virgin asked the developers to do it themselves. Rejecting the usual agency spin, Nick proceeded to point out errors in the manual, bemoan the ill-conceived box art and note that the title was the American equivalent of 'pocket billiards' and thus a web search for the game was most likely to yield gay porn sites.

"I'd tried everything else to get the game some attention so I thought I'd try honesty. No, it didn't work. Though I did realise what would really sell the game – Wario! He was just right. A suitable anti-hero. Mario wouldn't play pool, but Wario would. And you know he'd cheat. I put some ideas together but how do you talk to a monolith like Nintendo?" To view the charming cut-and-paste pitch Nick produced for *Wario Pool*, the brutally frank PR for *Pocket Pool* and numerous other examples of his diverse portfolio, go to www.nickpelling.com



» *Pocket Pool* boasted a 'killer' pool option, but no hands free mode.

"WITH BANGKOK NIGHTS, THE CODE THEY HAD WAS IN HUNGARIAN FORTH AND HAD DRIVEN A PROGRAMMER MAD. I DECIDED TO START FROM SCRATCH…" NICK PELLING

'Hey, all my friends seem to become the best pool players after a few pints…"

And so *3D Pool* was born. Nick built on the ball physics, adding spin, believable game logic and even trick shots. A dash of glamour was provided through an endorsement with the then British and European Pool champion 'Maltese Joe' Barbara, though the game's launch was held some distance from the pool halls of Vegas. "It was one rainy evening in a snooker club in North London. I did get to play with Joe though and he told me all about his holiday in Acapulco. Which was nice of him."

Ever the diplomat, he's quietly philosophical when explaining how the title's initial strong sales were adversely affected by publishers Telecomsoft being sold off to Microprose for a song. "Writing games is the easy part. It's all about getting the timing right."

Maybe so, but finishing a game also helps. Nick's career is full of false starts and half completed games. And there are some intriguing lost efforts amongst the 'fifty odd' games he never quite got to market. *Frak! 2* was intended as a musical, with specially written showstoppers and had Trogg providing hints to levels in sign language. As Nick recalls the unreleased *Porky PI*, he even launches into song…

"The world's first swing jazz detective pig/ Carving up the joint of Mr Big/*Porky PI*/You'll believe a pig can fly… Yes, another musical one. I'd done some of the mechanics and graphics. And a T-shirt."

It's all in his loft apparently, along with the code for *3D Wars*, which got to the 'playable demo' stage, before Nick decided this *Buck Rogers*-style shooter didn't meet his standards. "Technically, I felt it wasn't quite there. Perhaps I set the bar too high. I do wish I'd finished more and released more stuff. A friend once said me writing games was like Wimpy Homes just doing the foundations."

Nick did get plenty out there; mind, often with a little help from his friends. He collaborated with Gary Liddon on *Loopz* (1990) – 'Gary's sound as a pound. Twice the man he used to be. In every sense'; for *Duke Nukem 3D* (1997) he teamed up with old mate Ian Boffin; and for *3D Pocket Pool* (see boxout) he worked with his *Mortal Kombat II* buddy, David Leitch. "There's a kind of coding mafia thing going on here," muses wiseguy Nick. "But we were like a family. A happy one. There was always plenty of work to go around."

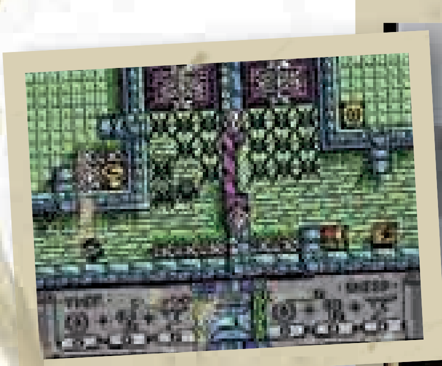
And the mob has a way of dragging you back in. Nick states he's "always on the edge of doing stuff" in the industry and recently he's produced both a pool game and a chess programme for mobile phones. Negotiations for their release are ongoing but his latest project is due to hit the market at the end of June. It's a puzzle game. One of the biggest in history…

"Five years ago I'd been writing a book based on the Knights Templar and Opus Dei. Charles Cecil at Revolution asked me to read through the back-story for *Broken Sword 2* and I came across the Voynich Manuscripts, which I hadn't heard of before. I read up on it and thought, I like this a lot – I could do this. Actually, the computer hacker hired to crack the code that gets killed at the start of the game is textured with pictures of me."

Try googling 'Voynich Manuscripts' and you'll discover a book written in a script that has eluded decipherment for over half a millennium. Or you could wait for Nick's forthcoming book on the text that continues to baffle the experts.

"It's a real life *Da Vinci Code* and a better story, I think. And it'd be nice to think it would sell 38.5 million copies."

The 'QC' in Orlando M Pilchard (QC) stands for 'Quietly Confident', you know…



» *Dandy* (C64) – just one of the many games Nick was called upon to bail out



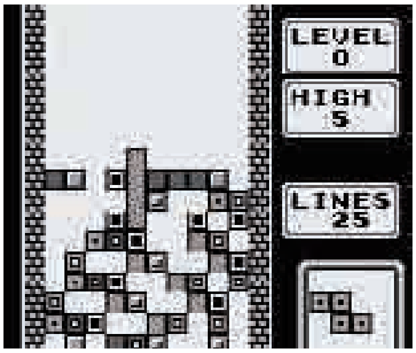


» **Left:** *Bangkok Nights*: The fighter is hopping, not limping. Honestly

» **Above** Nick and Gary Liddon discuss 'legitimate business' at the Back In Time Live event in 2001

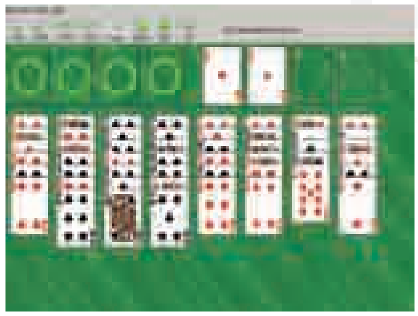


NICK PELLING DESERT ISLAND DISKS



TETRIS GAMEBOY

1 Pure elegance. Any programmer with a mathematical side will see a beauty in *Tetris*. If you were sending something on a spacecraft for aliens to pick up, you could send them something prosaic about our culture or you could give them *Tetris* and they'd think, 'Yeah, that's pretty cool.' It's something from our society that can stand up to, I don't know, the *Mona Lisa*. On an island, I could get old playing *Tetris*.



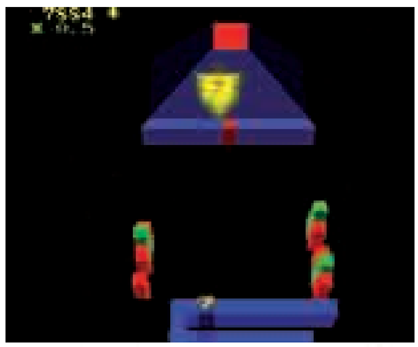
FREE CELL/ NET CELL PC

2 It has so many permutations of the basic idea, which is how many games of patience you can clear in a row with certain rules. It gets really, really difficult. Really, really, really difficult. A great thief of time.



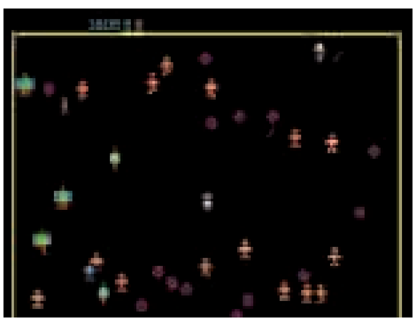
R-TYPE ARCADE

3 When I was doing *Bangkok Nights*, I spent a week in a rented house in Watford with other programmers and artists and they had *R-Type* in the garage on freeplay. I played it through to the end. Though if I took a cabinet to the island, it would be to break up and use for firewood.



I,ROBOT ARCADE

4 Loved the geometry of it – another mathematical thing. I spent a bit of time trying to do fast enough maths and polygons to make my own homage to it. They'd obviously worked so hard to make it really nice and I don't think anyone appreciated it at the time. I love that 'un-game' part. It's like they went off sideways in game development and no one followed.



ROBOTRON ARCADE

5 There's something about playing *Robotron* in the arcade that you can't reproduce at home. It's not just the dual joysticks; it's the quality of sound. Some of those sound effects stay with you forever. *Tetris* is the sort of game you see in your dreams. *Robotron* you hear in your nightmares.



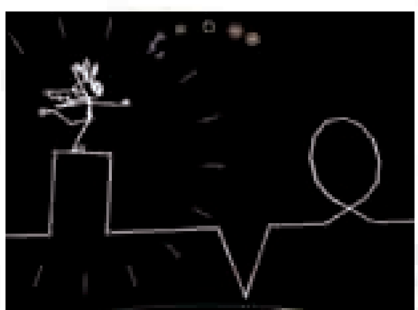
LIBBLE RABBLE ARCADE

6 A Japanese arcade game that had two joysticks and you had to surround enemies using string and pegs to enclose an area. If you enclose three, a demon appears. I played it with Ian Boffin in an arcade just off Leicester Square in London and we'd dance to music. It was the Eighties.



SUPER MARIO LAND GAMEBOY

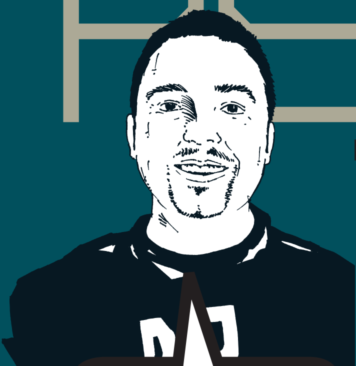
7 A nice little game that I would have played more of, if it wasn't for *Tetris*. *Mario* just feels like an old friend that doesn't know when to leave the party.



VIB RIBBON PLAYSTATION

8 When they made *Vib Ribbon*, they had more courage than I ever had. I love them for it. A really creative, beautiful, sweet little game, that goes its own way. I send out big love for that. You chose it too? You feel the love, man. *Vib Ribbon* stylee.

RETRORATED



With the DS Lite now available in the UK we thought it was a great opportunity to look at the machine's range of retro games. From perfect ports of classic N64 games to exciting new spins on classic IPs the DS offers something for everybody.

SUPER MARIO 64 DS

INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £29.99

Getting to play what's arguably the world's greatest 3D platformer is something of a mixed blessing. While the addition of Yoshi, Wario and Luigi, several new stages and some extremely enjoyable mini-games adds a new dynamic to a classic hit from yesteryear, the lack of an analogue stick (something that the original game was built around) hurts this DS remake greatly. And although Nintendo has provided you with a variety of different control methods, none of them feels exactly right, so certain parts of the game are now needlessly tricky. Once you do find a control method you're comfortable with however, you'll find *Mario 64 DS* gets a lot better, and while it doesn't quite reach the lofty heights of the original it's still a superb addition to your library.

OVERALL 89%



» A superb game that really needs the N64's analogue stick

CASTLEVANIA: DAWN OF SORROW

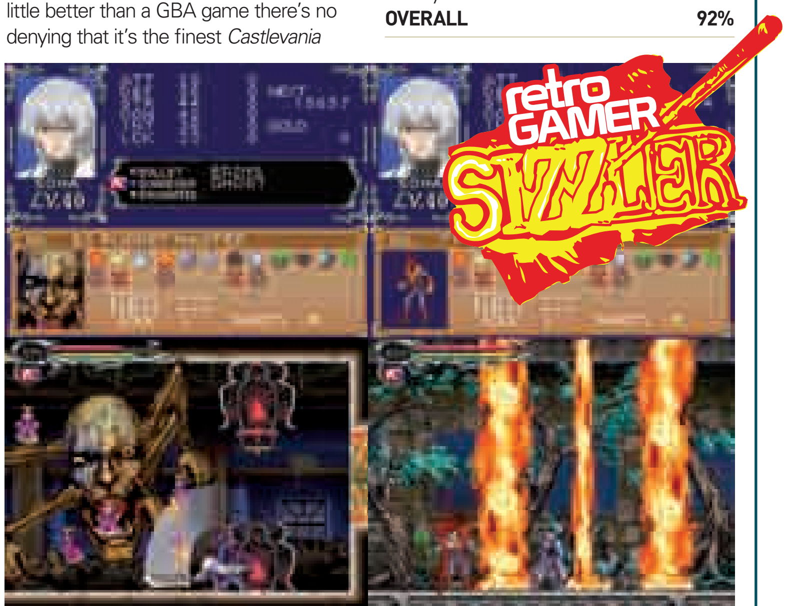
INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £29.99

We're in two minds about the DS's first *Castlevania* game. Whilst it's obvious that drawing spells with the stylus is a lame attempt at using the DS's unique functions and that it looks little better than a GBA game there's no denying that it's the finest *Castlevania* to yet grace a handheld. Continuing on from the GBA's *Aria Of Sorrow*, you once again play as Soma Cruz and find yourself battling all sorts of vicious beasties – so far, so *Castlevania*.

What elevates *Dawn Of Sorrow* above its handheld peers is its fantastic boss encounters, well-structured level design, enhanced soul system and a staggering array of different weaponry. Throw in a selection of superb tunes, a dazzling array of different souls to collect and you have the greatest *Castlevania* adventure since the legendary *Symphony Of The Night*. Utterly essential.

OVERALL 92%



» Many of the bosses in *Dawn Of Sorrow* are fantastic. The evil looking puppet man on the left being particularly nasty

NANOSTRAY

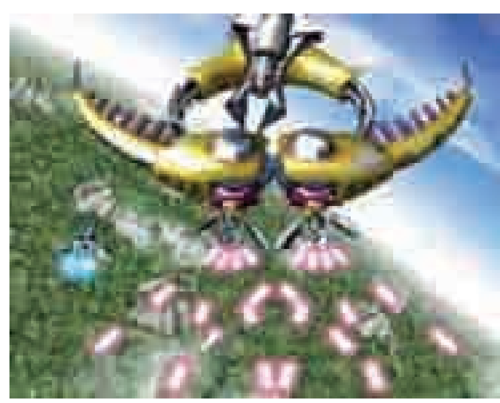
INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** THQ
- » **DEVELOPER:** SHIN'EN
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £24.99

***Nanostray* is unique on the DS as it's the only shoot-'em-up currently available.** While the touchscreen interface is pretty shoddy, *Nanostray*'s actual visuals are mind-blowing and really show off the DS's 3D capabilities. Sadly, the gameplay itself isn't quite up to the high standards, and is mainly spoiled by a flawed combo system. Successfully shooting a wave of opponents steadily increases your multiplier.

Sadly, it's possible to accidentally shoot enemies before they appear onscreen, thus screwing up the potential for higher scores. If this had been fixed *Nanostray* could have shown real potential. As it is, it's just a competent blaster that looks lovely.

OVERALL 65%



» Fans of *Axelay* will instantly spot the similarities to *Nanostray*



RIDGE RACER DS

INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** NAMCO
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £29.99

***Ridge Racer DS* is another N64 port, but unlike the excellent *Super Mario 64 DS*, the transition hasn't been very smooth.** Our biggest gripe is the wasted bottom screen. Not only does it serve no purpose, but the steering wheel system that NST has implemented just doesn't work very well – unless you consider haphazardly crashing from pillar to post to be great racing.

Ignore the obviously shoehorned-in controls and the end result is a competent, though far from spectacular racer that will probably sneak into your collection due to it having no real competition (apart from the amazing *Mario Kart DS*). A competant racer that should have been better.

OVERALL **60%**



» It's a slick conversion but *Ridge Racer DS* feels decidedly old hat

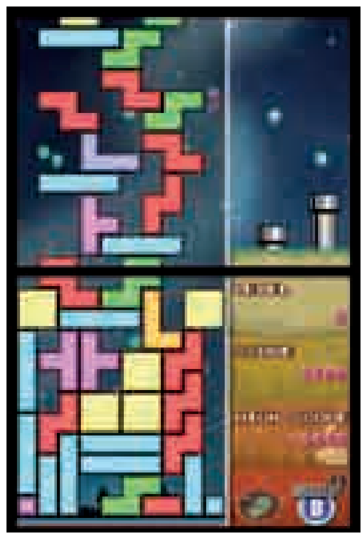
TETRIS DS

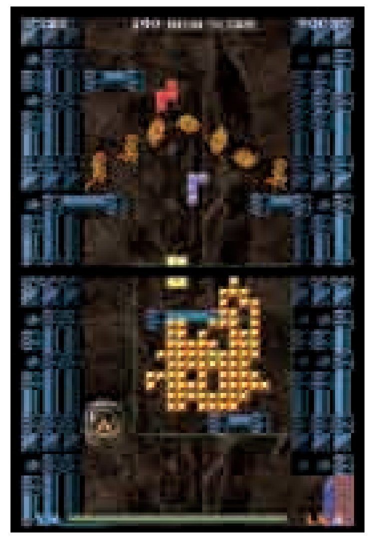
INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £29.99

Game Boy *Tetris* is generally considered to be the best handheld puzzler ever created, so Nintendo really had its work cut out with this new DS update. Fortunately *Tetris DS* doesn't disappoint and while it's far from perfect it does deliver a whole lot of fun that's bound to impress fans of the original. The biggest difference is that Nintendo has included six different game modes that range from classic *Tetris* to a tricky challenge mode that requires you to complete specific line-related tasks. Then of course you have the fantastic multi-player that allows you to play against nine other players via Wi-Fi or online if you have the required dongle.

OVERALL **86%**





ATARI RETRO CLASSICS

INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** ATARI
- » **DEVELOPER:** TANIKO
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £29.99

We've seen some poor compilations in our time, but nothing and we mean nothing comes close to this pathetic package of woeful conversions from Atari. Whilst there are some superb game choices, all of them are atrocious ports that bear little relation to the arcade originals. The new-age versions that Taniko have thoughtfully included are little better and suffer from garish visuals, extremely sloppy stylus controls (which in games like *Asteroids* and *Gravitar*, refuses to work properly) and feature some of the most annoying videogame characters ever. Please don't be fooled by the impressive roster of hit arcades games, as this is one of the worst DS games ever created and deserves to be avoided like the proverbial plague (and the literal plague).

OVERALL **09%**





» *Tempest* (right) is one of the better games on offer, but still suffers from a very poor conversion

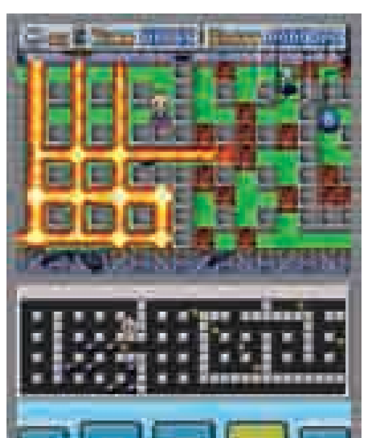
BOMBERMAN DS

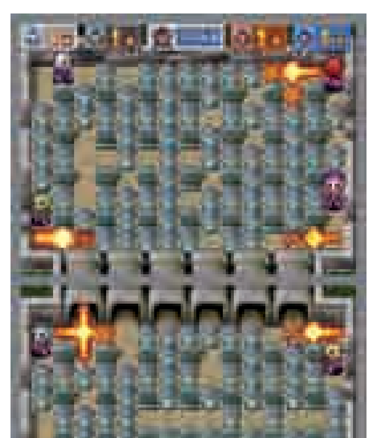
INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** UBISOFT
- » **DEVELOPER:** HUDSONSOFT
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £29.99

***Bomberman* is one of the greatest multi-player experiences to grace a console, so having the battlefield effectively extended to two screens should be brilliant right?** Well actually, no. Don't get us wrong, this new version of *Bomberman* is still an enjoyable experience, it's just that it requires a lot more work to play. Keeping an eye on two sets of screens at the same time proves to be quite a difficult task (especially when playing with seven other players) and you'll often find yourself getting unfairly caught out by stray bombs. As the single-player mode is so dull, it's a shame that the one part of *Bomberman* you can usually rely on doesn't work as well as it should.

OVERALL **68%**





RETRORATED

RESIDENT EVIL: DEADLY SILENCE



» On the one hand it's *Resident Evil* in the palm of your hand, on the other it's a ten-year-old PSX port

INFORMATION

» **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
» **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £29.99

Capcom has once again plundered its back catalogue and delivered yet another spin on its classic *Resident Evil* franchise (this time in order to celebrate the game's ten-year anniversary).

What we have here is effectively two games in one. There's the original PlayStation game in all its gory glory and a new Rebirth mode that makes some very interesting uses of the Nintendo DS's touchscreen and microphone. It's also a little easier to progress through thanks to more ammunition and a few extra save points.

While *Deadly Silence* is a very faithful conversion and provides a fair amount of atmosphere, it's let down by the same fiddly controls and annoying save points that, in all honesty, have plagued the series since its conception many, many years ago.

OVERALL **74%**

METROID PRIME: HUNTERS

INFORMATION

» **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
» **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £29.99

Considering how effective the Game Boy Advance *Metroids* have been in the past it's rather surprising to discover that *Metroid Prime Hunters* is actually based on the more recent GameCube titles.

Despite the change of viewpoint and the addition of an intense multi-player experience – best experienced online by the way, where you can mock opponants via the DS's microphone – *Metroid Prime: Hunters* is a worthy Nintendo DS title featuring all of the classic *Metroid* hallmarks (even if they are viewed from a fresh new perspective.)

The touchscreen interface is really very slick, and although it does take a while to get used to the controls, you can opt for a standard D-Pad and button layout. The visuals on the other hand are extremely impressive and, along with the trademark tunes, perfectly capture *Metroid*'s unique atmosphere. If you're looking for a well-crafted adventure and a gripping multi-player experience then *Hunters* really shouldn't be missed under any circumstances.

OVERALL **88%**



» A superb adventure that takes the portable Metroid games in a bold new direction

GANBARE GOEMON: TOUKAI DOUCHUU

INFORMATION

» **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
» **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** 5,534 YEN (ABOUT £26.00)

It's highly unlikely that the latest game in Konami's *Goemon* franchise will ever appear in the UK.

A crying shame, as it's a superb continuation of the series and deserves a wider audience. *Toukai Douchuu* looks absolutely wonderful and features a stylish blend of hand-drawn and cel-shaded visuals that truly bring the game's colourful characters to life. The gameplay is also lovingly crafted (with some decent stylus sections) and plays very much like a cross between the classic SNES and N64 games. In fact, the only real downside is you'll occasionally hit a brick-wall because certain parts of the game are impenetrable due to the Japanese language barrier. Overcome this however with a website like gamefaqs and you'll discover an enjoyable romp that shouldn't be missed.

OVERALL **66%**



» As well as a distinct look, *Goemon*'s latest DS game also features plenty of old-school classics (right)



LEGEND OF STARFI 4

INFORMATION

» **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO

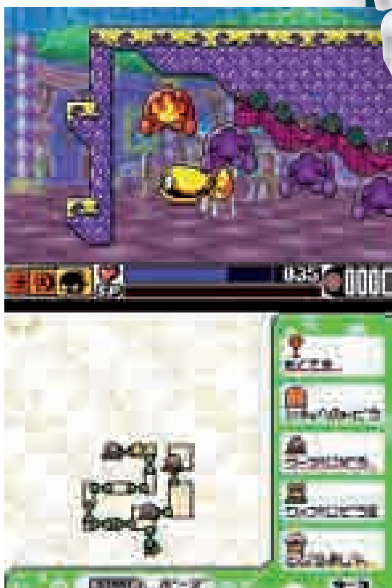
» **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** 5,534 YEN (ABOUT £26.00)

With the makers of *Super Princess Peach* behind the scenes, *Starfi 4* is high on cuteness and low on challenge but makes up for it with pure charm. Each level is packed with unique touches that will raise a smile from even the most cynical gamer whilst the 3D backdrops create a beautiful game without compromising the tight 2D gameplay.

It may be a new game but *The Legend Of Starfi 4* has 'retro' written all over it. From the underwater segments, that recall *Ecco The Dolphin* and *Super Mario Bros*, to the *Donkey Kong Country*-inspired steeds, *Starfi 4* will strike a chord with anyone who adores classic platform games.

OVERALL 78%



» Why *Starfi* has never appeared in the UK is beyond us

LOST IN BLUE

INFORMATION

» **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI

» **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £29.99

***Stranded Kids* was a criminally under-rated Game Boy Color release, so it's great to see that its sequel has the potential to meet a far wider audience now that it's finally available on Nintendo's DS.**

Sadly, while the game itself closely follows the style of the classic original, it feels a lot more laborious to play and lacks the charm that made *Stranded Kids* so enjoyable to play through.

What does impress, however, is the innovative uses that Konami has come up with for the DS. While stylus control is more or less a throwaway component of *Castlevania: Dawn Of Sorrows*, it's integral to *Lost In Blue*. Using the DS's bottom screen you can catch fish, milk goats and even create a variety of useful items and weapons. Sadly, *Lost In Blue* is hampered by a rather severe difficulty, which slows down the game's progression. It's certainly an interesting title, but it's a game that requires a considerable investment of your time.

OVERALL 72%





» One minute you're looking after a lost girl, the next you're milking a goat. Careful on those teats…

SPACE INVADERS REVOLUTION

INFORMATION

» **PUBLISHER:** RISING STAR GAMES

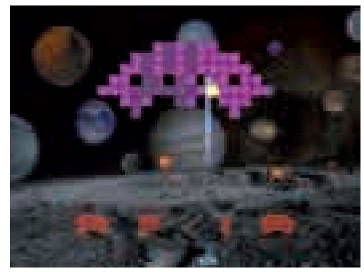
» **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £29.99

For us, *Space Invaders* is a classic example of a game that's now well past its sell by date. We can appreciate its importance in the grand scheme of videogames but it's since been eclipsed by far superior games. Rising Star Games obviously feels this way too, for while *Space Invaders Revolution* features the original game, the majority of this DS cart is crammed with new content that vastly expands *Space Invaders*' somewhat staid gameplay. One minute you're blowing up massive invaders, the next you'll be dealing with enemies that split into two. Sadly, even these enhancements aren't enough to stop *Space Invaders Revolution* from being a rather dull affair. For the hardcore fans only we're afraid.

OVERALL 49%

» A huge invader; that's about as exciting as it gets



PUYO PUYO FEVER 2

INFORMATION

» **PUBLISHER:** SEGA

» **DEVELOPER:** SONIC TEAM

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** 5,534 YEN (ABOUT £26.00)

Sonic Team's *Puyo Pop* franchise has been around for years now, and like *Tetris* it's a simplistic puzzler that's hellishly addictive to play. The latest instalment in the franchise is only currently available in Japan and features quite a few additions to the standard gameplay.

Along with the standard Puyo mode that sees you having to group together groups of at least four blobs of the same colour, you also have the some great multi-player modes and a tower that presents you with set challenges (which are sadly indecipherable). *Puyo Puyo Fever 2* is obviously a great puzzler, but the sheer amount of Japanese menus means you may want to wait for a translated version.

OVERALL 70%

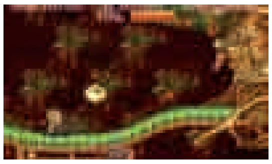




» Even the menus are difficult to navigate in this enjoyable puzzler

CAPCOM CLASSICS: REMIXED

A CAPital COMpilation



- » **SYSTEM:** PSP
- » **PRICE:** £34.99
- » **RELEASED:** 14 JULY
- » **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE/DIGITAL ECLISPE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-4
- » **FEATURED GAMES:** 1941: COUNTER ATTACK, AVENGERS, BIONIC COMMANDO, BLACK TIGER, BLOCK BLOCK, CAPTAIN COMMANDO, FINAL FIGHT, FORGOTTEN WORLDS, LAST DUEL, LEGENDARY WINGS, MEGA TWINS, QUIZ & DRAGONS, SECTION Z, SIDE ARMS, THE SPEED RUMBLER, THREE WONDERS, VARTH



» It's got a lovely style, but the original *Street Fighter* plays like a pig



Announced in issue 19 of Retro Gamer, Capcom's first collection of PSP games has become our Holy Grail. Ever since we realised that a) *Remixed* wouldn't be a simple port of the PS2 version, and b) that it was going to feature *Strider* we've been like little kids in a toyshop. Well, the waiting is finally over, and by golly it's been worth it.

Capcom Classics Collection: Remixed is the best compilation that's currently available for the PSP. Digital Eclipse (responsible for the original PS2 and Xbox versions) has pulled off some faithful conversions that look stunning on the PSP's pin-sharp screen – mainly because you can view every game in a selection of different ratios. 'Original' is just how the game appeared in the arcade, 'Fit' displays the equivalent of a 4:3 TV ratio, whilst 'Stretch' scales up the image to fit the entire screen. Best of all though is the fact that you can flip your PSP though 90° in order to play vertical games as they were originally intended. A great extra that was sorely missed from the PS2 and Xbox versions. Throw in configurable controls, Wi-Fi play and various other options and you have a thoroughly comprehensive UMD.

As for the emulation itself… well it appears spotless and despite countless comparisons we've been unable to spot any differences between Digital Eclipse's sterling work and Capcom's arcade originals. Throw in the same gorgeously designed menus that first appeared in *Capcom Classics* and you have one of the finest looking compilations ever.

Of course, faultless emulation, beautiful presentation and a plethora of options are pointless if the games themselves aren't up to scratch. Luckily, bar the odd stinker such as *Street Fighter, Last Duel* and *The Speed Rumbler, Remixed* features a fantastic array of truly great titles: *Strider, Final Fight, Forgotten Worlds, Magic Sword, Black Tiger, Captain Commando, 1941, Three Wonders, Mega Twins*… it just doesn't stop. Arcade fans are going to go wild for this, and deservedly so, it really is that good.



OPINION

After the disappointing Midway compilation it's great to see Capcom deliver the goods. There's a great range of different genres supported; emulation throughout is superb and many of the games play like a dream. While I had a few problems with the PSP's D-pad that's hardly Capcom's fault, and is often made null and void by the analogue nub. Here's hoping that Capcom's *Reloaded* collection is going to be just as good.

Damian Butt



» Still one of the greatest scrolling fighters ever made, and now you've a perfect portable port



» Rumours that 89% of our final score is for *Strider* are just that… rumours

IN SUMMARY

Faultless emulation, a stunning array of featured games and presentation that's to die for. If you're a fan of Capcom this is one of the best UMDs around. Go on. Treat yourself. You won't regret it.

RATING **90%**



OPINION

God bless you Capcom; this is one of the most enjoyable compilations I've played in ages. There are some truly fantastic games to choose from, the emulation is without equal and Darran's now happy because he can play *Strider* whenever he wants to. I would have liked to see more traditional games like *Commandos* and *1942*, but I guess that's going to be rectified with *Reloaded*. In the meantime, *Bionic Commando* and *Magic Sword* are going to keep me busy for a very long time.

Simon Phillips





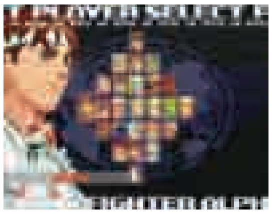
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RETRORATED

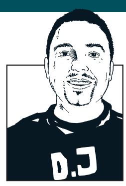
» CAPCOM PACKS A SERIOUS PUNCH WITH ITS NEW COMPILATION

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA ANTHOLOGY

SHORYUKEN!



- » **SYSTEM:** PS2
- » **PRICE:** £29.99
- » **RELEASED:** 07 JULY
- » **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-2



Listen very carefully. Can you hear it? That's the sound of literally thousands of *Street Fighter Alpha* fans weeping in joy. Sounds nice doesn't it…

So why is everyone getting so excited over Capcom's latest compilation? After all, all five games have already appeared on various consoles in the past, so why should this PS2 compilation of all four *Alpha* games (*1* to *3* plus *Alpha 2 Gold*) be any different? Simple, Capcom has finally ported the original arcade games in all their glory. Indeed, apart from the controls (more on that later) this is arcade *Street Fighter Alpha* through and through and boy does it feel good.

Take *Street Fighter Alpha 3* for example. There are no missing frames of animation that plagued the PlayStation version, and the bizarre hitboxes found in the Dreamcast outing have all been corrected, meaning that all the moves and tactics you used to rely on in the arcade (and believe it or not, a few hardcore gamers are still doing this) can now be executed in the privacy of your own home.

The *Street Fighter* love doesn't stop there though. No siree. Capcom has really gone to town on its beloved franchise and tucked away a plethora of extras, which cleverly explains all that weeping we were telling you about at the beginning of this review. As well as allowing you to turn the filtering on or off (thus creating a more authentic look) each game also features hyper and arranged modes and all enable you to edit the colours of your fighters (this doesn't bother us, but it's sending fans crazy). Perhaps the greatest addition though is *Hyper Street Fighter Alpha 3*, which includes all the exclusive console characters plus several new ISMs (playing styles) including a fantastic *Street Fighter 3* ISM that enables you to parry and pull off super cancels.

In fact, the only real niggle we have is that the PS2's digital pad just isn't up to the task of pulling off all the super specials that you'll need inn order to fully master the game. Of course, the die-hards will already have a stick and will be experiencing *Street Fighter Alpha* heaven, everyone else however may well wonder what all the fuss is about.



» A *Street Fighter Alpha 3* Sagat delivers some serious beat down

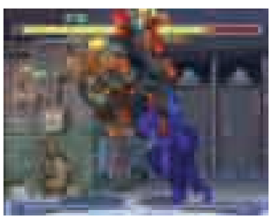


OPINION

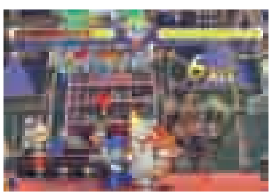
Seeing Darran has spent all his time harping on about the *Alpha* games, allow me to tell you a little more about the wonderful *Pocket Fighters*. It's a superb conversion (which again is arcade perfect) and sees a selection of super-deformed characters beating the hell out of each other. Each fighter has a collection of extremely bizarre combos (watch Chun-Li turn into *Resident Evil*'s Jill Valentine) but they suit the manic playing style perfectly. A great alternative to the far more serious *Alpha* titles.

Simon Phillips





» *Street Fighter Alpha 2* and this time Birdie receives a fistful of pain



» Cute characters, mental action and gems. What more could you want?

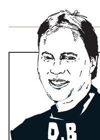


» The specials are really hard to pull off… unless you're us of course

IN SUMMARY

Capcom have delivered one of the most staggeringly comprehensive *Street Fighter* collections that we've ever had the joy to play. If only it wasn't hampered by the PlayStation 2's joypad…

RATING	**84%**



OPINION

For me, the *Street Fighter* franchise lost its way with the arrival of the various *Alpha* games, so I'm not enjoying this compilation as much as my peers. It's certainly a great package, but the addition of parrying leaves me rather cold. I didn't like it in *Street Fighter 3* and I'm not enjoying it here. Give me the original (and still brilliant, despite what Darran thinks) *Street Fighter II* any day of the week.

Damian Butt

eMag

JURASSIC PARK

SEGA'S ACTION SATISFACTION



- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **RELEASED:** 1993
- **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SEGA MEGA DRIVE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £3+

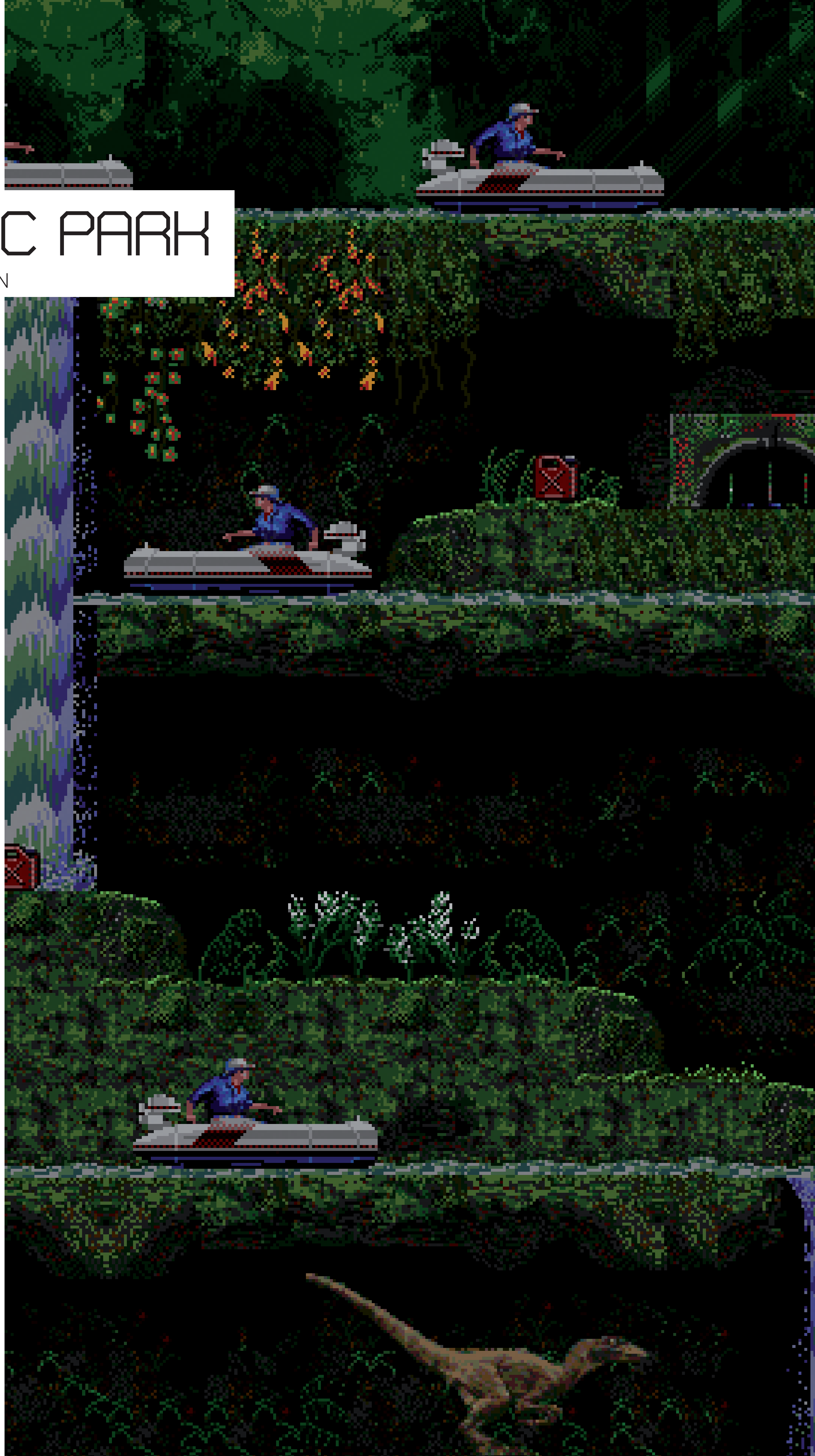


HISTORY

Think back to when *Jurassic Park* mania first started. It was like a rite of passage; you simply had to see Spielberg's new opus. The film's special effects blew everyone away, (for years it was held up as the target for videogame realism – 'it'll be just like the dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park*' they shouted), and afterwards everyone kept vigilant to see how the licensed games would turn out. Being the defining pop-culture media event of the year, you could be sure the games would be used as hot ammo for the console wars.

Electronic Gaming Monthly started running features on the games, and my friends and I would eagerly compare the different versions. While today some jaded people may complain the Mega Drive version has aged badly compared to the one on the SNES, at the time it captured everyone's attention. In screenshots the SNES version looked merely like a prettier NES title, with its top-down perspective. The MD game on the other hand allowed you to play as the Raptor! Finally it seemed like the claims about advanced gameplay were becoming a reality, and you had to be an MD owner to get in on the action. Which other system allowed you to be a flesh tearing Raptor, killing soldiers and eating smaller dinosaurs?

Even if you played as Dr Grant in the game, it was still more impressive than other versions. An interesting point to raise is that you could not kill the dinosaurs, only stun them temporarily. This added an extra layer of tension, since you had to keep moving if you wanted to make it off the island alive. It was a small feature, but one that worked incredibly well. Grant moved with a nimble agility, and rather than a pastel-like cartoon appearance, everything in the game had a realistic digitised quality to it. Witnessing the T-Rex's giant head lunging out and chomping you down, for the first time, was unforgettable – a truly thrilling sight.





BARGAIN HUNT

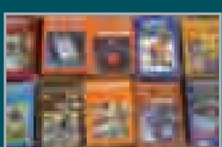
HUNT DOWN BARGAINS OR JUST DRINK UP THE LOVELINESS OF ALL THIS RETRO GOODNESS. FEAST YOUR EYES ON SIX PAGES OF THE VERY BEST THAT RETRO GAMING HAS TO OFFER…

Collecting retro games can be great fun, but you need to have a rough idea how much it's going to cost you. So here for your buying pleasure is Retro Gamer's buyer's guide. Where possible we have endeavoured to list the earliest international launch date, be it Asia, America or Europe. Prices were compiled from a variety of sources, including eBay, Japan auctions, car-boot sales, traders and general consensus. Foreign items will often be cheaper in their local country, so regional differences should be considered. Also, bear in mind that online items will often be cheaper than you will find in specialist stores. If you see an item selling for far less, good for you! We aim to help with finding those bargains, but if you see an item sold for much higher make sure you really want to purchase it. Prices fluctuate and the market sways, so there can never be a concrete listing. Bear in mind that something is worth as much as someone else is willing to pay. No one is perfect though, and we will openly admit that with over 100 different systems to list, mistakes can happen. If you spot a glaring error in our listings, please drop us an email at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and let us know about it!

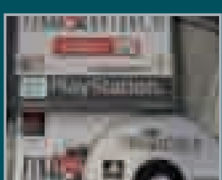
RETRO AUCTION WATCH

Retro Gamer will be sifting through countless pages of eBay and reporting on any items of interest (hardware and software) that have caught our eye. If something has sold for a staggeringly high amount of money (or lower than it normally would) you'll find them listed here.

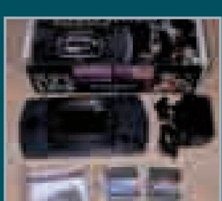
12 ATARI 2600 GAMES
Normally sells for **£30+**
Ended at **£13**



FINAL FANTASY VI
Normally sells for **£15**
Ended at **£43.50**



ATARI LYNX II AND GAMES
Normally sells for **£30**
Ended at **£14.01**



3DO



3DO GOLDSTAR
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£45 - £60**

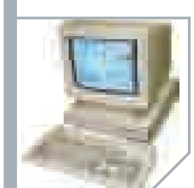


PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)
» YEAR **1993**
» » RARITY
» PRICE **£40 - £60**

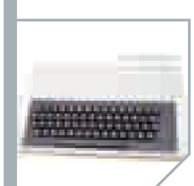


PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 - £35**
While 3DO systems had much potential, there wasn't enough software support and it eventually stopped production. There were still some great games released!
- STAR CONTROL 2
- RETURN FIRE
- CRASH AND BURN

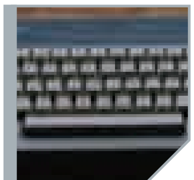
ACORN



ARCHIMEDES
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 (with games)**
Early RISC-based home computer, quite powerful at the time.
- VIRUS (STRIPPED DOWN VERSION OF ZARCH)



ATOM
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50**
Extremely old home computer by Acorn that's now hard to find.



ACORN ELECTRON
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**
Budget version of the BBC home computer (below).



BBC MICRO
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15**
A classic British home computer, and quite popular. Affectionately known as 'the Beeb'.
- EXILE
- ELITE
- WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

AMSTRAD



CPC 464
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 - £25**
Early classic 8-bit home computer from Amstrad, designed to compete against the C64 and ZX Spectrum. This early model has a built in cassette tape deck. Beware the models that come with a green screen monitor!



CPC 664
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 - £25**
Like the 464, except with a floppy disk drive. A short-lived model that was soon replaced by the superior 6128.



CPC 6128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25+**
Improved model which doubled the RAM of previous iterations. Later 'Plus' models came with a cartridge port.
- RENEGADE
- RICK DANGEROUS
- GRYZOR



GX4000
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50-£70**
Console version of the CPC Plus range, came with joypads. Limited range of games.
- BURNIN' RUBBER
- PANG
- SWITCHBLADE

APPLE

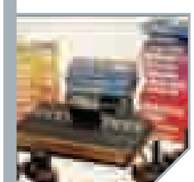


APPLE II
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ (with games)**
Like many early computers the Apple II was hand-built machine and sold to enthusiasts.
- KARATEKA
- ULTIMA IV
- LODE RUNNER

ATARI



400/800/600XL/XE
» YEAR **1979**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+**
Series of old 8-bit Atari home computers.
- DROP ZONE
- THRUST
- ZYBEX



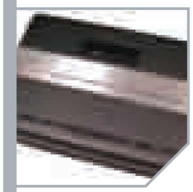
2600 (VCS)
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 - £30**
Earliest console by Atari. Various models, many with the classic wood panelling effect. Many UK gamers had their first taste of videogames on this.
- PITFALL
- ADVENTURE
- COSMIC ARK

RARITY GUIDE

ROCKING HORSE SHIT
HEN'S TEETH
LUCKY FIND
EBAY REGULAR
CAR BOOT SALE BARGAIN



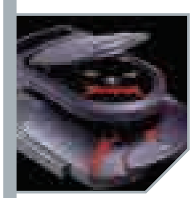
5200
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30**
Unpopular successor to the 2600, regarded as an Atari 400 without a keyboard.
- RESCUE ON FRACTALUS
- DIG DUG
- ZAXXON



7800
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 - £40**
Handily, Atari made the 7800 backwards compatible with the ever popular 2600.
- KARATEKA
- CHOPLIFTER
- WINTER GAMES



JAGUAR
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**
Failed attempt to beat the PlayStation and Saturn in the console race. Few decent games. But it does have Jeff Minter's *Tempest*!
- TEMPEST 2000
- ALIEN VS PREDATOR
- BATTLESPHERE (RARE AND EXPENSIVE!)



JAGUAR CD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70**
Rare and overpriced CD add-on for the Jaguar. Very few games, but it does look very much like a toilet seat!
- BATTLEMORPH CD
- HIGHLANDER CD
- TEMPEST 2000 MUSIC CD

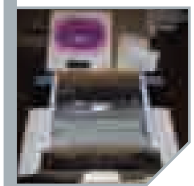


LYNX I/II (2ND IS SMALLER)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15**
Powerful handheld from Atari that failed due to poor marketing and battery life.
- BLUE LIGHTNING
- CALIFORNIA GAMES
- DIRTY LARRY RENEGADE COP



ST
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 depending on model**
Atari home computer and a big rival to the Amiga. There are many different models of various specifications.
- DUNGEON MASTER
- POPULOUS
- DAMOCLES

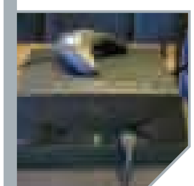
BANDAI



GUNDAM RX-78 COMPUTER
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£75 (prices fluctuate wildly)**
Ultra rare, early Japanese games computer by Bandai. Aimed at both gamers and anime fans. Expect to pay a much higher price for a machine that's in mint condition.



PLAYDIA
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90 and upwards according to eBay**
Bizarre Japan-only console, apparently made for kids.
- SAILOR MOON
- ULTRAMAN
- DRAGON BALL Z



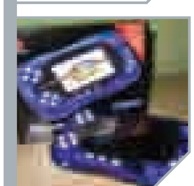
PIPPIN(ATMARK)
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £500+**
A strange hybrid system from Bandai and Apple. Very expensive and with very few games available. It's high price means that it's normally only sought after by collectors.
- RACING DAYS
- DRAGON BALL Z
- GUNDAM TACTICS



WONDERSWAN (B/W)
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**



WONDERSWAN COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**



WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL
» YEAR **2000**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25**
Handheld system by Bandai, fairly popular. Can now be bought very cheaply, especially in Japan. Be sure to buy the SwanCrystal, which is basically an improved 'Color' model. Both colourised models can run B/W WS games.
- GUNPEY EX
- SWAN COLOSSEUM
- JUDGEMENT SILVERSWORD

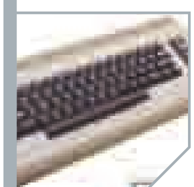
COMMODORE



AMIGA500/600/1200
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 (more with games, depending on model)**
Classic and incredibly popular 16-bit home computer by Commodore, that was designed to compete against the Atari ST range. Vast array of different models, with differing specs, the Amiga 500 (with a RAM upgrade) is a particular favourite with many gamers.
- SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE
- LEMMINGS
- SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER



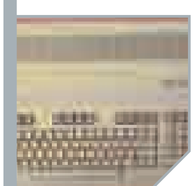
C16/PLUS 4
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 - £30**
The less well known sibling of the C64, but without the compatibility of its peers.
- TUTTI FRUTTI
- MONTY ON THE RUN
- KIKSTART



C64
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 - £30**
One of the best selling 8-bit home computers of all time. Competed against the Spectrum and Amstrad home computers. Featured the wonderful SID sound chip that was put to amazing use by the likes of Ben Daglish and Rob Hubbard.
- WIZBALL
- MAYHEM IN MONSTERLAND
- PARADROID



C64 GS (GAMES SYSTEM)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £30**
Commodore's cartridge-based machine that tried to take on both Nintendo and Sega. Sadly failed due to a lack of support from most publishers.
- PANG
- NAVY SEALS
- BATTLE COMMAND

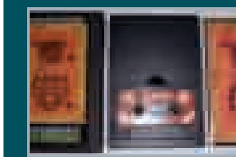


C128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 - £50**
Three machines (CPM, C64 and C128) in one box. Specialised software is relatively small in number.

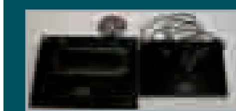


CDTV
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**
Commodore aimed for the 'every home should have one' market and missed by a country

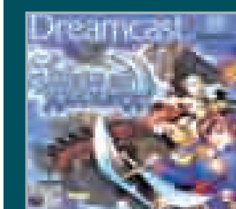
SABRE WULF
Spectrum
Normally sells for **£15**
Ended at **£3.75**



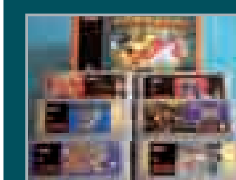
NEO-GEO AES AND NINE GAMES
Normally sells for **£220**
Ended at **£112**



SKIES OF ARCADIA
Dreamcast
Normally sells for **£20**
Ended at **£38.01**



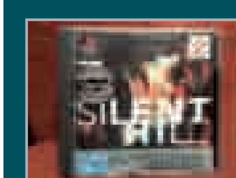
SEVEN SNES GAMES
Normally sells for **£30**
Ended at **£10.55**



QUAKE
Saturn
Normally sells for **£10**
Ended at **£23.50**



SILENT HILL
PlayStation
Normally sells for **£10**
Ended at **£23.01**



mile. A curious mixture of games and educational material.



CD32
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25**

CD-based console that followed on from the experimental CDTV. Sometimes described as a consolised Amiga 1200 with CD drive. Despite featuring some extremely impressive games, the majority failed to improve on their 500 and 1200 counterparts.
- EXILE
- SIMON THE SORCERER
- ALIEN BREED 3D



VIC-20
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 - £30 depending on condition/extras**

The computer that established Commodore brand.
- HELLGATE
- SERPENTINE
- SUPER SMASH

FUJITSU



FUJITSU FM COMPUTERS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+**

Early Nineties home computers by Fujitsu, which could read CDs.



FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200+**

A legendary console, which contains both a CD and disk drive. Based on Fujitsu's old FM Towns computers, and mostly backwards compatible with the majority of games. Very expensive, (especially if you find a machine in mint condition), but with a lot of chic!
- ZAK MC KRAKEN
- TATSUJIN OU
- SCAVENGER 4

MISCELLANEOUS



BALLY ASTROCADE
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**

Early videogame system that used interchangeable cartridges, developed by the Bally games division at Midway Games.
- GATE ESCAPE
- ICBM ATTACK
- TREASURE COVE



BARCODE BATTLER
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5**

Handheld LCD game, where you must swipe barcoded cards (or barcodes taken from soup packets!) to gather stats, and then battle against someone else who swiped barcodes. We're not making this up…
–Cocal Cola with Lime 500ml
– gamesTM issue 39
– Orange Tic Tacs



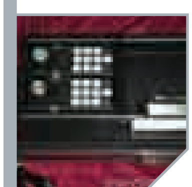
CASIO LOOPY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25**

More inanity from the land of the rising sun. This is a console designed especially for female gamers and it even allows stickers to be printed out… Casio hoped it would do better than their failed PV-1000 console released in 1983.



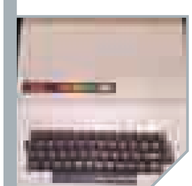
FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F
» YEAR **1976**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 (from the USA)**

The first commercially released console that used programmable cartridges. A real piece of history. Despite this, it's surprisingly cheap to purchase (although importing from the US may cost a fair amount).



COLECOVISION
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 standalone**

Coleco's third generation videogame system. Quite a few decent games, and considering its age it's a fairly powerful machine. Many of its arcade conversions were considered superior to the other systems on the market.
-CONGO BONGO
- SMURPH RESCUE
- CABBAGE PATCH KIDS



DRAGON 32/64
» YEAR **1982/3**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 (very cheap on eBay)**

Early British home computer that tried to cash in on the early Eighties boom. Short-lived though quite popular. The 64 model was released roughly a year after the 32.
- GRID RUNNER
- DEVIL ASSAULT
- CAVE FIGHTER



ARCADIA 2001
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**

Failed console by Emmerson, which had numerous different clones released as well.
- FUNKY FISH
- JUNGLER
- ROBOT ATTACK



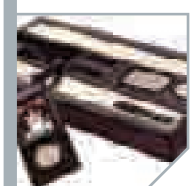
EPOCH CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**

Obscure early Japanese console, which in 1983 had a budget 'Junior' model released.



EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30**

Epoch's successor to the Cassette Vision, which was also marketed in Europe under the Yeno label. Apparently it only had around 30 games released for it.



INTELLIVISION
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 upwards depending on extras**

Developed by Mattel, the system was revolutionary. It was the first console to be technically 16-bit, go online (to download games), and it featured voice synthesis. Today it still has a strong retro following.
- FROG BOG
- ARMOR BATTLE
- LOCK 'N' CHASE



ODYSSEY
» YEAR **1972**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**

The original home videogame console, even before Atari got in on the act! Created by Ralph Baer, this is the ultimate piece of gaming history. Fortunately, it can be purchased relatively cheaply.



PLAYSTATION
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 depending on condition/model**

Another attempt by Sony to enter the videogame hardware market (after the MSX), this time they took over the market. There are countless undocumented yet excellent PS games. Was later re-released as the PSOne, which is more expensive, but looks much nicer in design.
- CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT
- FINAL FANTASY VII
- RIDGE RACER



SAM COUPE
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 - £200 (allegedly for a mint complete system)**

Originally developed by Miles Gordon Technology in Swansea, the Sam Coupe was a unique 8-bit British home computer which didn't fare very well. It could even emulate the 48K Speccy to a degree.
- DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH
- ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS
- PRINCE OF PERSIA



SUPERVISION
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15**

Marketed by several different companies, this was essentially a cut-price competitor to the monochrome Game Boy. Unsurprisingly, it was not manufactured for very long and is now hard to find.
- ALIEN
- HONEY BEE
- POLICE BUST



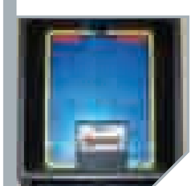
TIGER ELEC. GAME.COM
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15**

Attempt by Tiger Electronics to compete against the Game Boy.
- RESIDENT EVIL 2
- SONIC JAM
- DUKE NUKEM 3D



TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)
» YEAR **1983/4**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**

Series of old computers by Tomy.



VECTREX (MB/GCE)
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80**

The only home system ever to come with a vector display, enabling true vector graphics.
- SPACE WAR
- SPINBALL
- HYPERCHASE



X68000
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90 upwards**

Home computer by Sharp, released only in Japan. Famous for its arcade ports.
- CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES
- STREET FIGHTER 2
- FINAL FIGHT

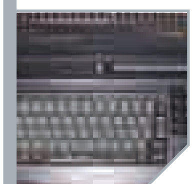
MSX



MSX 1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 - £30**
An early attempt to create a standard gaming platform, fairly common in the UK.
- PENGUIN ADVENTURE
- KNIGHTMARE
- THE GOONIES



MSX 2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 - £50**
Updated and more powerful version of the MSX, very popular in Holland and Brazil where even today some excellent homebrew games are developed.
- METAL GEAR 2
- ALESTE 2
- VAMPIRE KILLER

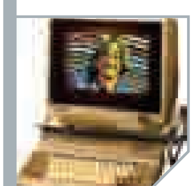


MSX 2+
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 - £50**
Another hardware update that proved to be very popular in Holland.
- SPACE MANBOW
- GOLVELLIUS 2
- F1 SPIRIT 3D SPECIAL



MSX TURBO R
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 - £90**
A final and not very popular hardware update, that was virtually exclusive to Japan.
- FRAY
- PRINCESS MAKER
- ILLUSION CITY

NEC



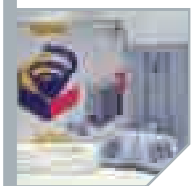
PC-6### (ALSO MK II)
» YEAR **1984 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10-£50 depending on model**
Quite old 6000 series of home computers by NEC, with a lot of very cool Japanese games for it. Released in the USA as the NEC Trek. While fairly cheap, be careful of shipping prices.



PC-8801
» YEAR **1981 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Old computer series by NEC, with several different models over the years. Has a massive roster of cool games, including the original *Silpheed*. While very cheap to buy online from Japan, shipping is expensive.



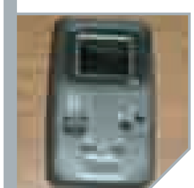
PC-9801
» YEAR **1983 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Another home computer series by NEC, again with many great games. Laptop versions also exist. Most games by Falcom are worth watching out for.



PCFX
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 prices can fluctuate**
32-bit tower console by NEC, resembles a PC. Released in Japan only, had software support until 1998. Only a few action titles. Apparently, it also had quite a bit of hentai on it.
- LAST IMPERIAL PRINCE
- CHOUJIN HEIKI ZEROIGAR (SHMUP)
- ZENKI FX (FIGHTER)



PC-ENGINE
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£55**
Classic piece of Japanese hardware from NEC which features many excellent arcade ports and a few exclusives. The CoreGrafx system is basically a PC-Engine with AV output.



PC-ENGINE GT
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 depending on extras**
Portable handheld version of the Japanese PC-Engine that played all Japanese Hu-Cards.



TURBO GRAFX-16
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 (can be found quite cheap)**
American version of the PC-Engine. It has territory lockout, so the two system's Hu-Cards are not mutually compatible.



TURBO EXPRESS
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 (massive fluctuations)**
Portable handheld version of the American Turbo Grafx-16.
- BONK/PC KID SERIES
- BLOODY WOLF
- NINJA SPIRIT



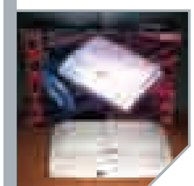
SUPER GRAFX
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 (prices can fluctuate)**
Meant to be the successor to the original PC-Engine, but sadly failed due to lack of games. It is backwards compatible, but only had 6 games specifically released for it.
- ALDYNES
- DARIUS PLUS
- GHOULS AND GHOSTS



PCE CD-ROM/ TURBO GRAFX CD
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 upwards**
CD-ROM add-on for the PCE and TG16, released in 1988 and 1989. It has no region lockout.



PCE DUO/TURBO DUO
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£120**
System that combines the PCE/TG16 with its CD add-on. Released in both Japan and America in 1991 and 1992. The CD games still have no region lockout.



DUO-R
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80**
Stripped down white version of the PCE Duo, without headphone port. Later in 1994 a Duo-RX version was released, slightly blue in colour and came with a 6 button control pad.
- DRACULA X
- SHUBIBINMAN 3
- LORDS OF THUNDER

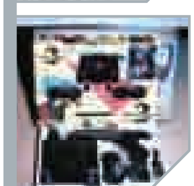
NINTENDO



FAMICOM
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£60**
Nintendo's first foray into the home console market, with over a 1000 games to choose from!



FAMICOM AV
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40**
A cheaper remodelled version of the Famicom, now with AV output.



FAMICLONE
» YEAR **N/A**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**
Mass-produced pirate versions of the Famicom system. Virtually infinite different designs.
- CRISIS FORCE
- SWEET HOME
- HAUNG DI



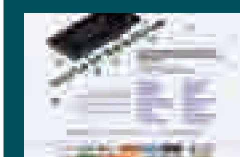
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70**
Nintendo's attempt to bring cheap rewritable disk-based gaming to the masses. Be warned, the drive belts break very easily.

RETRO GAMING SITES

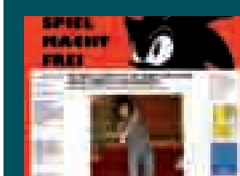
RADIO SEGA
Mark Kidley's Sega soundtrack site has recently had an impressive update, now featuring some new tunes. Kidley is promising plenty more tracks in the coming months, so if your favourite tunes aren't there then check back at a later date.
Radio.mysega.co.uk



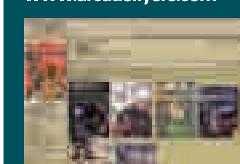
WORLD OF SPECTRUM
World of Spectrum is the most comprehensive Spectrum site we've ever had the pleasure of logging on to. There's a mass of scanned magazines, and an extremely friendly forum and it's even possible to play many games for free.
www.worldofspectrum.

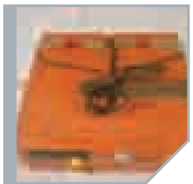


UK RESISTANCE
Another plug for UK Resistance. Full of humour and with an unhealthy love for anything Sega, UK Resistance is guaranteed to cast an amusing spin on the games industry (and no doubt profess their undying love for *OutRun 2*). Check it out.
www.ukresistance.co.uk



THE ARCADE FLYER ARCHIVE
There's some mind-blowing art on display here, as well as plenty of awfully bad Eighties flyers that have to be seen to be believed. Check out the *Contra* ad – Genius.
www.arcadeflyers.com





SHARP FAMICOM TWIN

» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100**

Combined Famicom and Disk System, by Sharp. Comes in two colours, black and pink.

- OTOCKY
- NAZO NO MURASAMEJOU
- PATLABOR



GAME&WATCH

» YEAR **1980-1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£1 - £200**

Series of handheld LCD games that were created by the legendary Gunpei Yoko.



GAME BOY B/W

» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5**

Nintendo's original handheld portable, with interchangeable cartridges. Despite it's age, and monochrome display, there are many excellent classic GB games.



GAME BOY POCKET

» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8**

A smaller and more compact GB, with improved screen. A Japanese version with built-in light was released and sells for a much higher price.

- SUPER MARIO LAND
- TETRIS
- POKÉMON



GAME BOY COLOR

» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£12**

Colour-based version of the classic GB. Backwards compatible, but it also has several exclusive games that were rather special.

- METAL GEAR SOLID: GHOST BABEL
- RESIDENT EVIL GAIDEN
- HARVEST MOON 3



GAME BOY ADVANCE

» YEAR **2001**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25**



N64

» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**

Nintendo's last cartridge based console, competitor to the PlayStation and Saturn. Has several highly sought after classics. Some games (like *Donkey Kong*) require the RAM expansion pack and wouldn't run without it.

- SIN & PUNISHMENT
- PILOTWINGS 64
- BLAST CORPS



N64 DD

» YEAR **1999**
»» RARITY
» PRICE **£150 and upwards!**

Another attempt by Nintendo to incorporate disc media with one of their cartridge-based consoles. Expensive and very few games were released.

- F-ZERO EXPANSION KIT
- MARIO ARTIST SERIES
- DOSHIN THE GIANT



NES (TOASTER)

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15**

The Western version of the Famicom, popular the world over. Plenty of great Nintendo classics to choose from, and very cheap too.



NES (DOG BONE)

» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50**

Remodelled and improved version of the traditional NES. Region lockout was also removed, meaning all 72 pin based NES games work.

- VICE: PROJECT DOOM
- SNAKE'S REVENGE
- SUPER MARIO BROS. 3



SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**

Nintendo's successor to the NES, and one of their most popular machines. A retro staple with a fantastic selection of games.



SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JPN)

» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 - £100**

Cheaper and redesigned SNES.

- SUPER METROID
- SECRET OF MANA
- SUPER MARIO WORLD



VIRTUAL BOY

» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80**

Nintendo's failed attempt at a pseudo Virtual Reality games system. Quite a novelty as there is nothing else like it. Be warned though, as many gamers have complained that the machine gives them headaches – never a good thing.

- INSMOUSE NO YAKATA (HP LOVECRAFT INSPIRED FPS)
- WARIO LAND
- RED ALARM

PHILIPS



CD-I 205/210/220

» YEAR **from1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 (more with Digital Video Card)**

Unique system by Philips.The 200 series consists of front loading systems, with each one having slightly different specifications.



CD-I 450/490/740

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 (more with DVC)**

Consolised version of previous models, requires a different '9956' DVC.

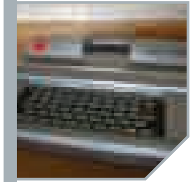
- THE APPRENTICE
- BURN CYCLE
- HOTEL MARIO



VIDEOPAC G7000

» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**

Popular across the world (especially Brazil and Holland) and known also as the 'Odyssey 2'.



VIDEOPAC G7400

» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**

A successor to the G7000, that was backwards compatible.

- QUEST FOR RINGS
- PICKAXE PETE
- MUNCHKIN

SEGA



32X

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 (must have RF + Mains)**

Failed Mega Drive add-on, designed to enhance it's capabilities.

- KNUCKLES CHAOTIX
- KOLIBRI
- DARXIDE



DREAMCAST

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 depending on extras**

Sega's final hardware release. No gamer should be without it. Amazing official roster of games, plus it can emulate older systems.

- IKARUGA
- CRAZY TAXI
- REZ

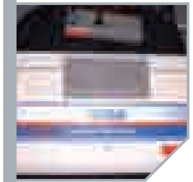


GAME GEAR

» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 more with extras**

Handheld by Sega, designed to compete against the Game Boy. Low battery life, but effectively a portable Master System. Could also be used as a TV (as shown here).

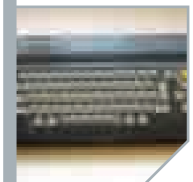
- SHINOBI 2
- COLUMNS
- TV TUNER



SG-1000 (PLUS THE MARK II AND III)

» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20-£50**

Sega's first console, and a piece of history! The Mark III model would later be redesigned to become the Master System. Like the Japanese Famicom, it's much nicer than the UK version.



SC-3000

» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £50**

Computer equivalent of the SG-1000, also by Sega. Was popular in Australia and other ex-colonies. Mutually compatible with the SG-1000 as well.

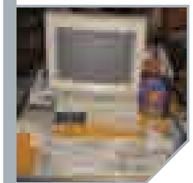


MASTER SYSTEM I/II

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 with leads etc.**

Popular Sega 8-bit console, which competed against the NES. Adapted from previous systems.

- PHANTASY STAR
- WONDER BOY 3: DRAGON'S TRAP
- NINJA GAIDEN



AMSTRAD MEGA PC

» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10.50 (according to eBay)**

A strange hybrid between an Amstrad PC and a Mega Drive. A nice collectable oddity, though according to past eBay auctions, not a high seller.



TERADRIVE

» YEAR **1991**
»» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £100**

Another Mega Drive computer

hybrid. Released earlier than the Amstrad hybrid, these systems have no connection. Due to being exclusive to Japan, they are seldom seen in the wild. Likely to be very expensive if you are able to find one.



MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II
» YEAR **1989+**
» RARITY
» » PRICE **£10 depending on model**
The big daddy, Sega's most successful console and a retro classic.

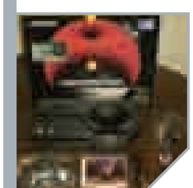


GENESIS 3
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35**
Developed by Majesco. This third, cut-down model is rarer and has some compatibility issues. USA only.



NOMAD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100**
Handheld Mega Drive. Pricey, low battery life and some compatibility problems.

- RANGER-X
- THUNDER FORCE IV
- COMIX ZONE



MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ depending on system**
CDX/Xeye
A series of different hybrid MD and MCD systems, released in the three main territories.



MEGA CD (SCD) I/II
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 depending on system**
Sega's CD add-on for the Mega Drive. Despite heavy criticism, has many excellent games.

- POPFUL MAIL
- SNATCHER
- SONIC CD



PICO
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 (more with games)**
Toy computer released for young children. The games come in nice storybook style boxes.

- SONIC'S GAMEWORLD
- ECCO JR. AND THE GREAT OCEAN HUNT
- THE LION KING: ADVENTURES AT PRIDE ROCK



SATURN
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30**
Sega's competition against the PlayStation and N64. A real 2D powerhouse, that despite an amazing catalogue of games never really took off.

- SATURN BOMBERMAN
- GUARDIAN HEROES
- DRAGON FORCE

SINCLAIR

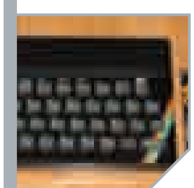


ZX-80
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200 Apparently if boxed and mint**
Very early British home computer from Sinclair. Low capability meant limited gaming possibilities. Now extremely hard to get hold of.



ZX-81
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 if mint**
Improved home computer from Sinclair, with black and white ASCII graphics. Not as hard to source as a ZX-80, but still commands a respectable price.

- 3D MONSTER MAZE
- MAZOGS
-SABOTAGE



ZX SPECTRUM 48K
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**



ZX SPECTRUM 128K
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40**



ZX SPECTRUM
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35**



ZX SPECTRUM +2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35**



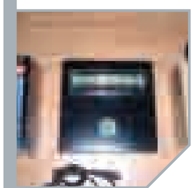
ZX SPECTRUM +3
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40**
The British classic loved by many. A vast improvement over previous Sinclair computers, it was normally compared against the C64 and Amstrad home computers, which in turn caused many playground arguments over who had the better machine.

- HEAD OVER HEELS
- 3D DEATHCHASE
- SKOOL DAZE

SNK

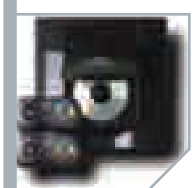


NEOGEO AES
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150 and upwards**
High powered home system by SNK. Features many high quality arcade games. Sadly, due to the high price of the original games, many titles are now ridiculously expensive to purchase.



NEOGEO MVS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 (multi-slot systems cost more)**
High powered arcade system by SNK, which many people prefer over the home based AES due to lower pricing of games. (The majority of NeoGeo titles appeared on both systems, or alternatively can be converted).

- METAL SLUG
- KING OF FIGHTERS ##
- WAKU WAKU 7



NEOGEO CD
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 varies**



NEOGEO CDZ
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 varies**
CD-based NeoGeo systems, an attempt by SNK to lower the cost of NeoGeo games. The CDZ is cheaper and has slightly improved loading times. Most CD titles are ports from the AES/MVS.

- VIEWPOINT
- AGGRESSORS OF DARK COMBAT
- SAMURAI SHOWDOWN RPG



NEOGEO POCKET (B/W)
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**

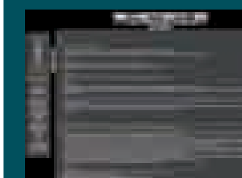


NEOGEO POCKET COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35**
Handheld NeoGeo systems by SNK, that sadly failed to compete with the Game Boy, despite featuring some great games. Still a wonderful little system though. Be sure to buy the later colour screen model.

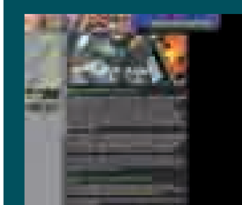
- FASELEI!
- CARD FIGHTERS (CAPCOM/SNK)
- MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM (CAP VS SNK)

RETRO GAMING SITES

SYSTEM 16
Everything you could possibly want to know about the arcade history is lovingly documented at this informative little site. Practically every arcade game ever made is listed here, and there are loads of great screenshots to drool over. Great Stuff.
www.system16.com



THE METROID DATABASE
Fans of Nintendo's female bounty hunter would be wise to check out The Metroid Database as it contains plenty of fascinating nuggets about the franchise's history. Every single game from the original NES outing to the recent *Metroid Prime Hunters* is reviewed and there's a selection of great downloadable content.
http://mdb.classicgaming.gamespy.com/index.htm



LEMON AMIGA
We're huge fans of Commodore's 16-bit Amiga, so it's great to find a site that's as dedicated as the excellent Lemon Amiga. Like sister site Lemon64, this is an amazingly comprehensive website that features thousands of screenshots, friendly forums and a great chat-room. If you've got an Amiga you'll have found home.
www.lemonamiga.com



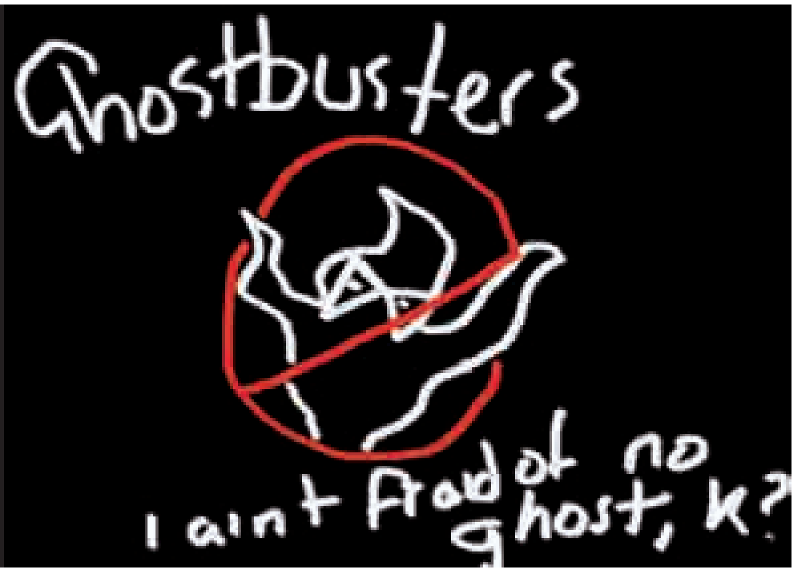
Special thanks to **lofi-gaming-org.uk** who supplied several of our screenshots

RETRO SCENE

WITH RETRO REMAKES' COMPETITION NOW IN FULL SWING, WE THOUGH IT WAS TIME FOR YOU TO HAVE A GANDER AT SOME OF THE GREAT PRIZES THAT CAN BE WON

RETRO REMAKES REVEALS ITS FULL PRIZE LIST AND PAYS HOMAGE TO AN OLD FRIEND

BIG MONEY, BIG PRIZES I LOVE IT



» There are three *Ghostbusters* remakes in progress for the competition. Oddjob's title screen still needs a fair amount of work…

If you read last month's issue of Retro Gamer you'll already be aware of the new competition that's going on over at Retro Remakes.org at the moment. Due to the huge string of support from the likes of X-Arcade, Addictive 247, Garage Games, GBAX.com and of course ourselves, competition organiser Rob Fearon has only just managed to put the prize list together and reveal the competition's five judges.

The total prize haul comes to nearly £4,000 and includes everything from a GP2X, to the professional boxed set of DarkBASIC, to subscriptions for Retro Gamer.

Retro Remakes' Caffeine Kid (known in the real world as Andrew Pointon) and the dedicated individual who organised all the sponsorships told us a little more about the various awards that will be given out.

"We have the traditional 1st, 2nd and 3rd places, as well as awards for Sound, Vision and the Most Accessible game of the competition," he explained. Pointon also had time to tell us about two of the competition's more unusual awards, the Judge's Spot Prize and The Toker. "Each judge has a prize that they can give away to the remake they think deserves an award for whatever reason, extra effort or special touches where the designer went beyond the call of duty. Or it could be that the judge just loved the original game and feels that the new title is a worthy remake," he continues. And The Toker award?

"Toker (real name Steven Phelps) was the main admin of Retro Remakes and sadly died last year at the start of July. He always wanted to see someone remake *Minder* – so the award is in his honour and will hopefully ensure that someone finally gets around to remaking the game for him. Maybe it's a little silly, but we really wanted him to be part of this competition even though he isn't actually here anymore, other than in spirit anyway."

Steven certainly seems to be watching over proceedings as the forum is already a hive of activity, even at this early stage, and as always, Retro Gamer will be there to bring you the latest updates.

THOSE PRIZES IN FULL



» This *Lazy Jones* remake is coming along nicely. Expect a 'Making Of' about the original game in a coming issue of Retro Gamer

1st PRIZE

Natural Point SmartNAV Headtracker
Programming 2D Scrolling Games Book
X-Arcade Trackball
Multimedia Fusion 2 Developers Edition
DarkBASIC Professional Boxed Version
Dark Physics
Dark AI
GP2X
Dual Player X-Arcade Stick
Torque Game Builder
GLBasic SDK Premium
Cosmigo ProMotion
12 months remakers.co.uk Hosting
USB Dance Mat
Binman Boxed Game
Rocket Boards Boxed Game
PlayBASIC
Armadillo Run
Ultratron
Retro Gamer Subscription
Retro Gamer T-Shirt
Mega Drive DTV
Addictive247 Games Pack
Total Prize Fund: **£1,159**

2nd PRIZE

DarkBASIC Professional Boxed Version
Dark Physics
Dark AI
X-Arcade Solo (GC,DC,PS2 or Xbox adapter)
Torque Game Builder
GLBasic SDK Premium
Cosmigo Promotion
6 months remakers.co.uk hosting
Binman Boxed Game
PlayBASIC
Armadillo Run
Ultratron
Retro Gamer Subscription
Retro Gamer T-Shirt
Megadrive DTV
Addictive247 Games Pack
Total Prize Fund: **£734**

3RD PRIZE

X-Arcade trackball
Torque Game Engine
GLBasic SDK Premium
Cosmigo Promotion
The Games Factory 2
Showcase Snooker Boxed Game
Rocket Boards Boxed Game
PlayBASIC
Armadillo Run
Ultratron
Retro Gamer Subscription

Retro Gamer T-Shirt
Mega Drive DTV
Addictive247 Games Pack
Total Prize Fund: **£435**

MOST ACCESSIBLE
Natural Point SmartNAV Headtracker
GLBasic SDK Premium
Torque Game Builder
ASCII Grip one handed controller for PS/PC
OneSwitch PC switch interface
Illuminated Switch
Armadillo Run
Ultratron
Total Prize Fund: **£412**

SOUND
Torque Game Engine
GLBasic SDK Premium
Cosmigo Promotion
Quill 3d Boxed
USB Dance Mat
PlayBASIC
Armadillo Run
Ultratron
Retro Gamer Subscription
Retro Gamer T-Shirt
Mega Drive DTV
Total Prize Fund: **£321**

VISION
GLBasic SDK Premium
Torque Game Engine
Cosmigo Promotion
Quill 3d Boxed
USB Dance Mat
PlayBASIC
Armadillo Run
Ultratron
Retro Gamer Subscription
Retro Gamer T-Shirt
Mega Drive DTV
Total Prize Fund: **£321**

THE TOKER AWARD
DB Pack
GLBasic SDK Premium
6 months Remakers.co.uk hosting
Learn to program 2D games in Blitz Basic
Showcase Snooker Boxed Game
Armadillo Run
Ultratron
Total Prize Fund: **£230**

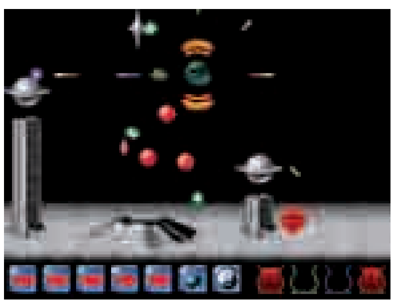
JUDGE'S SPOT PRIZES
Armadillo Run
Retro Gamer Subscription
Retro Gamer T-Shirt
Mega Drive DTV



» Steven Phelps was an integral part of Retro Remakes and now has an award named after him



» Not a compo entry, but this remake of *Barbarian* looks pretty swish. Let's hope the new decapitations are nice and gory



» *Wizball* is another title that isn't being entered for the competition. A shame as it's looking like a great update



» Activision's *H.E.R.O.* is yet another fantastic title that is being remade for the competition

METROID REMIXED

SAMUS' 16-BIT ADVENTURE RECEIVES A BRAND NEW REMAKE

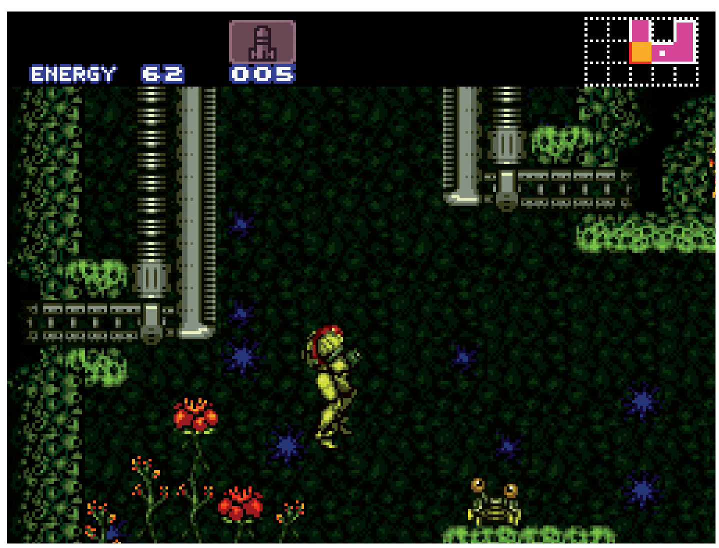
A hacker known as Drewseph has released a brand new remake of Nintendo's 16-bit SNES classic *Super Metroid*.

Drewseph (who was the game's project leader and level designer) along with Kejardon (Main Programmer), Jathys, Jman2050 and MathOnNapkins (additional programmers) have taken the original game, re-arranged the level design, dramatically altered the game's physics, added some new items and greatly enhanced the game's wall-jumping sections.

The two year labour of love, although obviously not as well designed as the original game, is still worth a play and presents newcomers and veterans alike with plenty of new experiences to uncover. The new physics take quite a while to get used to and the look of some of the more familiar locations seem a little over-the-top at the start of the game, but there's no denying that this is a polished product. Our only real issue is Drewseph's insistence on having the player continually rely on Samus' wall-jumping skills, and the fact that the game is obviously geared towards those that know the original game inside out. However, considering so many ROM hacks normally try to cram in everything bar the kitchen sink it's pleasing to see that the Redesign guys shown restraint.

Of course, whether Nintendo is happy about one of its classic titles of yesteryear being tinkered with remains to be seen, but while it's available we suggest you give it a try.

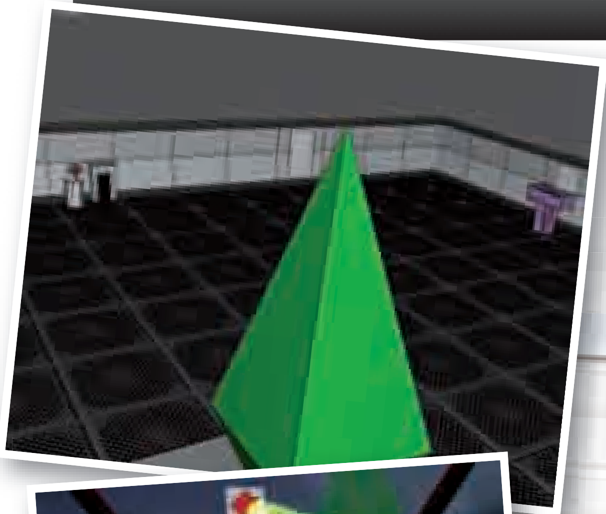
You can download the required patches at http://drewseph.zophar.net/



» It's new, but oh so familiar

DEVELOPER DIARY

AFTER COMPLETING THE REMAKE OF TOTAL ECLIPSE, WE DECIDED TO GO BACK TO DRILLER, THE GAME THAT KICK-STARTED THE FREESCAPE SERIES IN 1987. THE ONLY WAY TO TRULY REMAKE A GAME FROM THE EIGHTIES IS TO GO BACK AND LIVE IT, SO WITH A MIX OF ILLUSTRIOUS ARTISTS FROM 'NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL MUSIC 9' WAILING AWAY IN THE BACKGROUND, WE PAUSE TO WONDER WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO PEPSI & SHIRLEY...



THESE ARE THE DIARIES OF ANDY & STU – THE OVINE BOYS

UPDATE TIME...

Right then, Smila's (Trevor Storey) *Project Paradroid* has now been put to bed, so we can hopefully spend the rest of our time getting *Driller* finished. After spending the majority of April working on *Project Paradroid* we've been going like the clappers, yet still found time to write our diary. Are we good to you or what?

» The floors in Emerald now have a great new floor that doesn't corrupt. Yay!

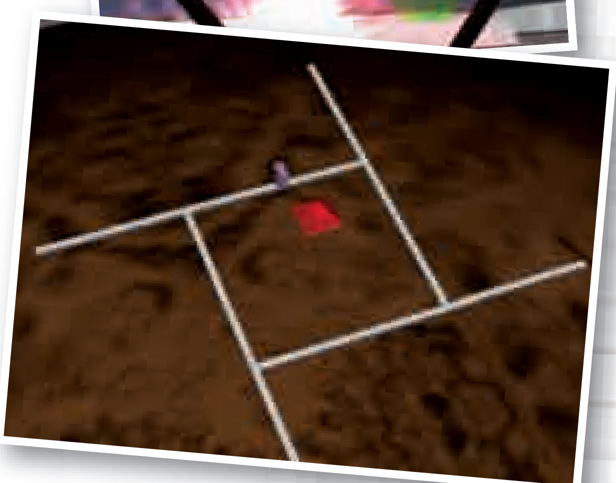


Monday 8th May

We had a posting on our forum from Paul Gregory, who wrote the 16-bit versions of the 3D Construction Kit series. How honoured are we? (very I can tell you). He not only assures us that someone did actually win the trip to Hawaii for the *Total Eclipse* prize, but even offers to give us guidance on our *Driller* remake (should we need any.) That's the great thing about being a part of the retro community; people are always willing to go that extra mile in order to help someone else out.

Tuesday 9th May

A great success today, as we've managed to get Emerald to sport a brand new look in the flooring department. Who'd have thought that something that is seemingly so simple could be such a pain in the neck to actually get right? The image we've included (see side panel) is just one of the variations on the floor style that we've chosen. We have another one that we plan on using for some of the later levels – maybe we'll show it to you next month...



Wednesday 10th May

The new laser code is now in and it's looking very good indeed (even if I do say so myself). We are doing it in such a way that each room can have a different type of laser. With any luck the end result should look rather nice. One thing you'll notice from this month's screenshots is how we're using the old floor, and that it's continually getting messed up. Luckily, this is something we've now managed to correct.

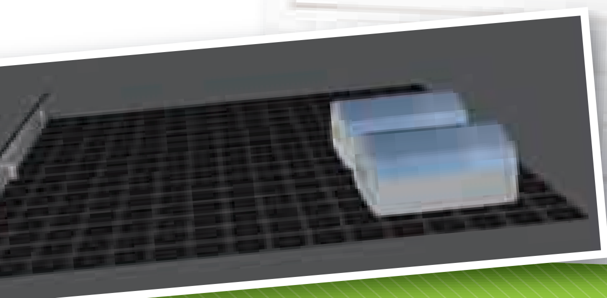
Thursday 11th May

Next on the list is Ruby. Not much really going on in Ruby other than it being hundreds of feet off the surface of Mitral. Mind your step. I've just got a basic texture for it at the moment, although I intend to improve on this at a later date and will add a lot more detail.

Monday 15th May

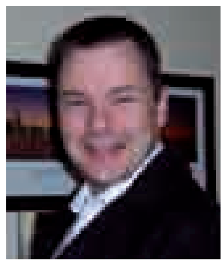
We've now updated the script code so that it's easy to include a few more animations rather than the usual fade on/fade off. The first place I'm going to be using the new code is in the hangers where a 'not so secret' flying vehicle can be found. No sooner do I start using the new code, I quickly find myself putting in the code to make the new vehicle fly. Having a free roaming entity like the vehicle means there has to be extra checks for ceiling height and the like, so it takes a little longer than I originally planned.

» **Above:** Time to get to work on Ruby. Don't be fooled by the minimal look, it's going to be awesome **Below:** This is Aquamarine at a very early stage. We're having a few problems with the roofs at the moment but we'll get there



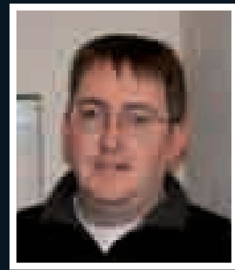
Tuesday 16th May

Finally, it's back to the bigger locations! Aquamarine is up next. Using the same techniques as before, the room is built using the original positions as a guide. We have a few reusable models now, so all that is required in this location are the relevant bunkers and arrows. Starting with the bunkers first, I tried creating a rolled over roof, I also experimented with the new real-time subdivide in the newly released AC3D version 6. A great new feature and I'm sure it will come in handy, but I don't think it



NAME: STUART COLLIER
JOB: IT MANAGER
FAVOURITE GAMES: CHOLO, BRUCE LEE OR IMPOSSIBLE MISSION
FIRST REMAKE: JETPAC ON THE PC
LIKES: THE FRIENDLINESS OF THE RETRO COMMUNITY

NAME: ANDY HEWITT
JOB: WEB DEVELOPER, TEAM LEADER
FAVOURITE GAMES: GRADIUS, STORMBRINGER, ELITE AND MANY MORE!
FIRST REMAKE: BOULDERDASH CALLED THE ROCKFORD FILES
LIKES: CALL OF DUTY 2, OUTRUN 2006 AND GENERAL NINTENDO GAMES



will work for the roof. As you bend it, it disconnects from the walls of the bunker. Will be a real pain to correct it and not sure if it there is an easy way, so will switch off sub-divisions for now.

Wednesday 17th May

One of the characteristics of Aquamarine is that there are two bunkers, one of which contains the Ketar Jet. In the original you would go to a different location when entering the bunker. We've decided to keep the interior of the bunker in the main level so the next job is to make the evac and jet models. The evac is up first because I'm curious as to how it will eventually look!
The basic shapes are in, and it looks good but not good enough for the remake so more detail is going to be required.



» An early model of the Evac craft

Sunday 21st May

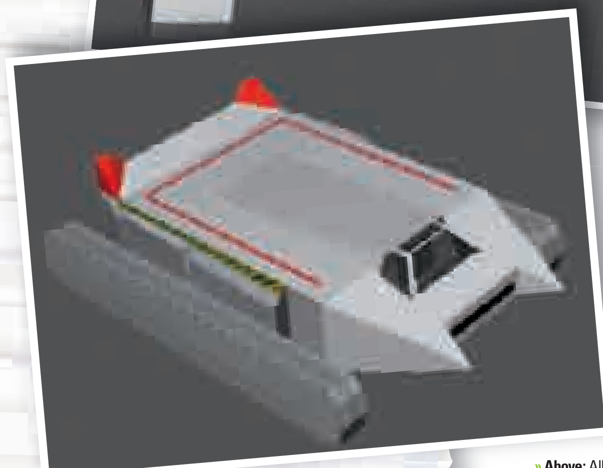
The detail is finally starting to take shape, or at least the evac craft is. The tracks are on, along with a new spoiler that any chav would happily kill for. I've also included some side panels that will probably become some sort of grill later on.
The cockpit was the hardest to scoop out, using a Boolean operation it has left a bit of a mess with too many surfaces. Very frustrating



» **Below:** The Evac is slowly beginning to take shape; then it's on to the Ketar Jet

Tuesday 23rd May

Spent most of the last few days tidying up the model, removing the surplus surfaces and vertices. Have also started to create the textures, mainly for the body and tracks. I'll add transfers on the model later on, so apart from the A-team red stripe and hazard lines it's mostly rusty, scratched metal coating the majority of the craft.



» **Above:** All finished. A thing of beauty lasts forever

Wednesday 24th May

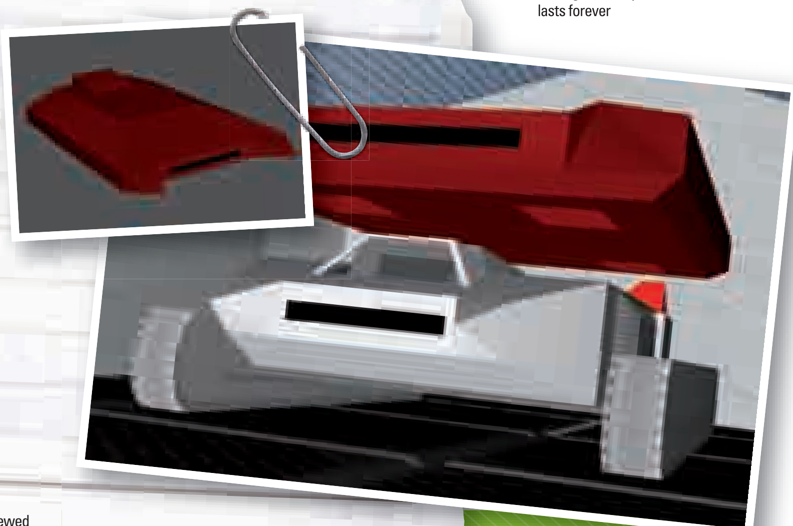
Finished off the evac craft so it's now time to go to work on the Ketar Jet. This is a liberating discovery in the original as it allows you to view the world from even more angles and also get to places on the moon that you have been previously unable to reach. Unfortunately it was all a bit too good to be true, as this craft can not summon the drilling machines.
Time to place the vehicles in the actual bunker. In-game, one of these will be hidden depending on which one you are currently occupying.

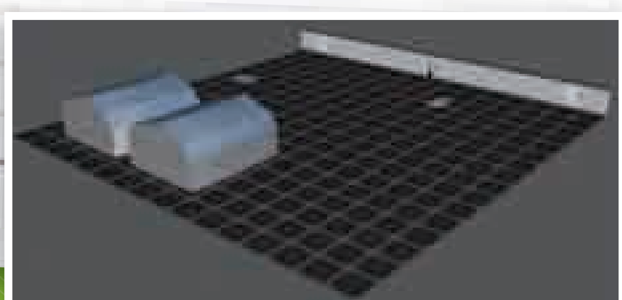
Thursday 25th May

Aquamarine now complete. Bunker door can now be opened in the game. Beryl is up next. Things are going very well.

Friday 26th May

The retro remakes competition (www.retroremakes.com) is almost upon us, I think we shall still be busy with *Driller* over the next month or so, so it's doubtful that we'll be able to enter this year. You never know though, stranger things have happened in the past…





» Aquamarine viewed from another angle

RETRO SCENE

Remake of the Month

EVERY MONTH WE LOOK AT OUR FAVOURITE REMAKES; THIS MONTH IT'S GAME & WATCH ONLINE AND SUSHI SAMURAI

GAME & WATCH ONLINE

GET YOUR GAME & WATCH ON!

The top dudes over at Handheld Remakes have gathered together a page of online, playable Game & Watch cover versions together (with the occasional new variation on the theme) for you to while away the hours at work by revisiting a host of Ninten-retro goodness.

When you happen across such a convenient collection of independently made pseudo-LCD playability, it's hard to find the impetus to trawl eBay looking for the overpriced originals. These online conversions offer everything but the tactile pleasure of fondling an actual unit.

Particularly captivating among the growing number of G&W remakes is a Flash version of *Donkey Kong II* by Reinier Feijen, which features a brilliant rendering of the double-screen casing complete with authentic piezoelectric beeping and clean Flash vectoring that beautifully reproduces the look of an LCD segment.

In honour of the G&W concept, the first title is a perfect rendition of the original Nintendo LCD game, *Ball* by Brain Apps. Also Flash-rendered and with the benefit of a pause button, this is retro simplicity.

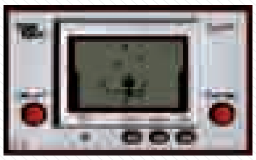
Surely the top of the list, however, is *Chainsaw Maniac* – which isn't a remake at all. Ignoring its newness, this would have made the perfect G&W title back in the day. You take the role of a frightened teenager alone in a forest of chainsaw-wielding maniacs. Grabbing a handful of knives from the obligatory wooden shack, you line yourself up with the approaching mute murder and let them run onto your blade. You can only carry three knives at a time, and must regularly return to the shacks to replenish your weaponry, lest your shoulders be relieved of their light burden.

Good fun with some modern touches that I would gleefully maim and murder to own as an actual unit.

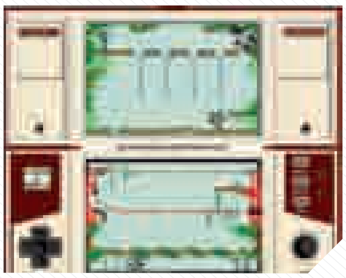
Overall: Game & Watch not only lives on, but continues to evolve in glorious LCD mono-colour.

RATING **90%**

» The original G&W is first on the list in honour of the extraordinary series



» A classic dual-screen Game & Watch playing *Donkey Kong II* – who needs these new fangled consoles?



» A long list of Game & Watch glory awaits at Handheld Remakes



retro GAMER SIZZLER

- » **FORMAT:** FLASH, JAVA, DIRECTOR
- » **RELEASE DATE:** MULTIPLE
- » **DEVELOPED BY:** MULTIPLE
- » **LINK:** HTTP://WWW.HANDHELDREMAKES.ORG/ONLINE.PHP
- » **REVIEWED BY:** SPANNER

SUSHI SAMURAI



» The *Sushi Samurai* ready for action

- » **FORMAT:** FLASH
- » **RELEASE DATE:** MAY 2006
- » **DEVELOPED BY:** CBC
- » **LINK:** HTTP://WWW.CBC.CA/KIDS/GAMES/SUSHISAMURAI/
- » **REVIEWED BY:** SPANNER

HONOUR IS YOUR APPETISER!

I'm really starting to like these Flash and Java games that play direct inside your internet browser. Having to do nothing more than add a webpage to your favourites in lieu of a full installation is a huge bonus.

Sushi Samurai is just such an online, Flash-fuelled game, reproducing the thrills of Nihon Bussan's 1982 *Burger Time*. There have been more than a couple of updates, and due to the simplicity of the original platformer, there's very little that can really go wrong with them.

So, what a game like this needs is not any form of clever re-engineering, but a few new quirks and foibles that serve to remind you just what a great place arcades used to be. *Sushi Samurai* has provided just such an eccentric lilt and succeeded in an imaginative retelling of the well known story.

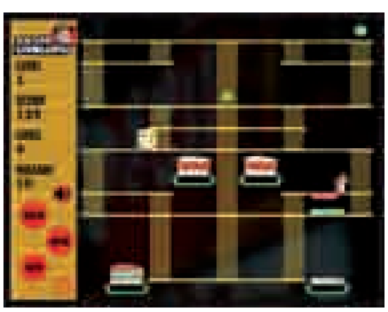
You, the Samurai, must hightail it up and down the ladders and across the platforms kicking the layers of sushi onto the level below, until a delicate presentation of Japanese culinary delights rest at the bottom of the screen. Various forms of cooking-related critters run around the screen trying to assail the Samurai, such as tofu, radishes, poisonous pufferfish known as fugu (fugu you too) and shitake mushrooms. These ingredients can be stunned by throwing watabe at them, allowing the noble retainer to slip past and honour his guests with a plate of cold fish.

Despite the Eastern take on a slice of Americana, *Sushi Samurai* plays pretty much the same, only with an oriental techno beat setting a tense ambience and the sharp, antiseptic line drawings of the Flash engine providing slick graphics.

Burger Time is never going to reside in videogame Valhalla, but with this reminder of its long forgotten charm, it will be remembered as a champion among lesser games.

This is the reason for a retro remake; it reminds you how good old games used to be.

RATING **81%**



» Even vegetarians aren't safe from these vicious slices of tofu



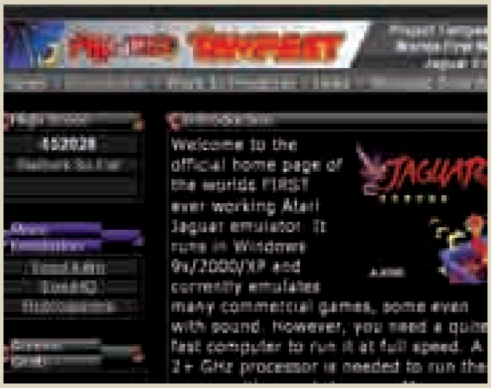
» Death by fugu. It's an honourable way to go

EMULATE THIS

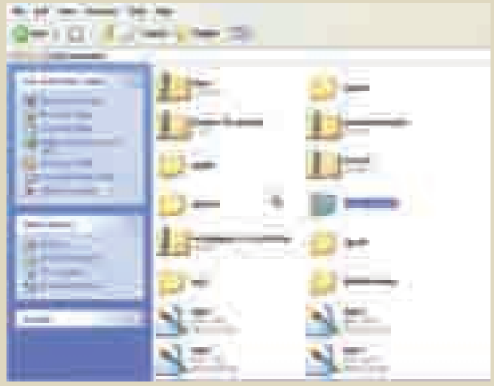
EVERY MONTH RETRO GAMER WILL BE GIVING YOU A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF EMULATION. TO TIE IN WITH OUR FEATURED MACHINE, THIS MONTH WE'LL BE LOOKING AT THE ATARI JAGUAR

New cat

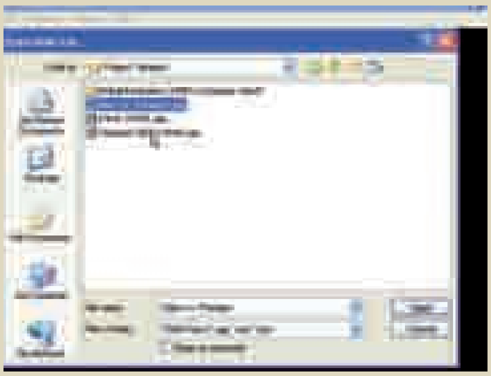
The Atari Jaguar was one of the smallest-selling consoles in history, so chances are many of its games will be new to you. Emulators are new for the Jaguar and at best unstable, so we're going to look at Project Tempest.



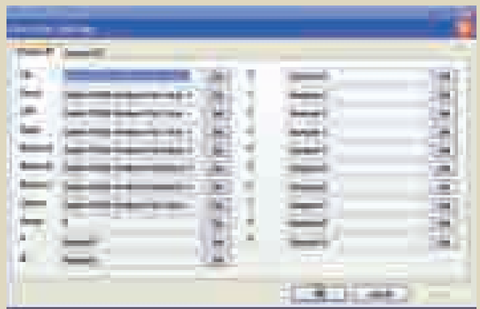
STEP ONE Head to the project tempest website http://pt.emuunlim.com/downloads.htm. Here you'll find info and Emulator updates. There are known issues with Jaguar Emulation at the moment so research is key. All the best Jaguar games are emulated and supported by the Project Tempest game roster but some obscure releases haven't made the cut just yet. The emulator is frequently patched and updated so check back often; the site also has a featured emulated game section where you can get screen grabs and details of games.



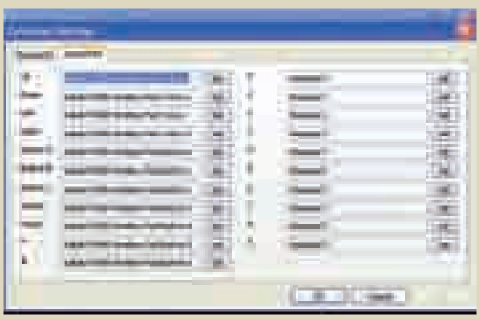
STEP 2 Download the latest version of Project Tempest to my documents. Create a new file in my documents and name it something suitable. Unzip the Project tempest downloaded zip into your new file. Before you locate the file and start the emulator check that you have required spec to run it, it's a real memory hugger; computers of the last couple of years will be fine but beyond that you may need to visit your task bar and start to turn background programmes off that are not currently in use.



STEP 3 Create another new file in My Documents to download or transfer any roms that you are entitled to play into. All roms need to be extracted as Project Tempest doesn't read Zipped files. Now locate the first file that was created and double click on the pt run box. The emulator starts straight away. Click on File then open Rom and select the directory that holds the unzipped Jaguar Roms. Project Tempest automatically saves this directory path, so close the emulator to refresh..



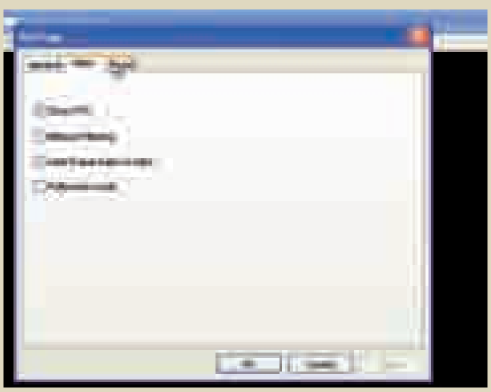
STEP 4 Restart Project Tempest by double-clicking on its run box again. The Jaguar's controller was a beast and all the keys are emulated here, but most PC and Mac joypads don't come close to that vast amount of buttons so we have to think about what we configure; there is no practical keyboard alternative configured so we will need to configure that accordingly too. Because of the variety in PC and Mac controllers where necessary (some have less than 16 buttons) we will balance joypad and keyboard commands based on most common game configurations.



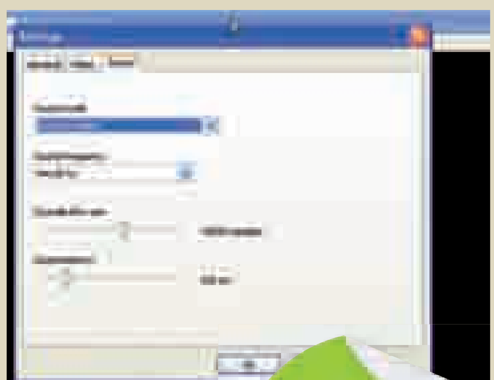
STEP 5 Under the settings option, click on controllers, then the joypad no 1. If your joypad has auto configuration you'll need to be dextrous, click and hold the left mouse button over the relevant direction button and push the corresponding direction or action button on the joypad; repeat until you have the basic commands. If you don't have auto configuring to pad the process is the same but you don't need to hold the mouse button down. On some keyboards the # and * appear on the numeric pad so adapt accordingly. Repeat the process for joypad 2 and quit Project Tempest again.



STEP 6 Locate the Project Tempest run box again, double click once more and then go to file and open ROM. Find the game you want to play, highlight it and click on open. The game will start automatically. Project Tempest is already configured for the joypad, so just follow the game's on-screen options to get started. It is worth trying a couple of games before you get started to see how they run and modify any settings that may improve your computers performance.



STEP 7 If the emulator is running, games will run at the correct speed; if they suffer from the following, trial and error will sort them out – it is different for each computer, but you only have to do it once. Game speed and graphical discrepancies can be tweaked through the settings option; reduce the screen size. If this still doesn't resolve the issues check the bilinear filtering box. This will optimise displays for the emulator. It's not about the ROM that is running, but the computer that Project Tempest is running on, fix it once and it stays fixed.



STEP 8 Also in the Settings menu is the Sound option. The sound enabled option allows the user to turn sound on or off, to reduce memory usage really, but the best remedy is to reduce the buffer size by moving the slider. Even Tempest and its incredible soundtrack doesn't need the default thousand samples. The sound frequency option is all about clarity; just try different settings until you have removed all backround noise and speaker buzz. The final sound option Latency is a slider that synchronises the sound to the game; just move the slider to alter the timing.

Note: Unfortunately, Project Tempest isn't currently available for the Macintosh and it's unlikely to be appearing for some time. The PC version is still far from perfect at the moment, so we may not see a Macintosh port until the PC original is in full working order. As always though, as soon as we hear anything on the situation we'll let you know.



THE DEFINITIVE OUTRUN

Stuart Campbell straps himself into an open-top Ferrari and prepares for a beautiful journey through the history of Sega's most beloved driving franchise

THE MAKING OF…

Peter Liepa explains the origins of *Rockford* and how he went on to star in one of the greatest 8-bit puzzlers of all time



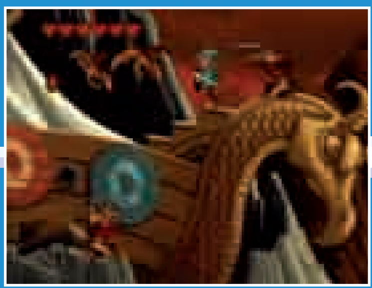
CONVERSION CAPERS

Considering the power of the original Hard Drivin' coin-op it's not surprising the home versions were left wanting. Retro Gamer uncovers its journey to the home computer



THE MAKING OF…

Retro Gamer talks to one of gaming's bravest developers, Dale DeSharone, the man who brought *Zelda* to Phillips' CD-i system





NEXT MONTH

THE COMPLETE LOWDOWN



In an exclusive new interview, David Jones, the creator of the Magic Knight games reveals everything you ever wanted to know about the classic budget franchise

DEVELOPER LOOKBACK



Formed in 1982, LucasArts has found great success within the industry and tried its hand at everything from point-and-click adventures to First-Person Shooters. Retro Gamer discovers how it all began

RETROINSPECTION

Sega's 16-bit console was one of its greatest triumphs and helped it achieve dominance in both the US and Europe. Retro Gamer pays deserved respect to the 16-bit wonder





AND THE REST...

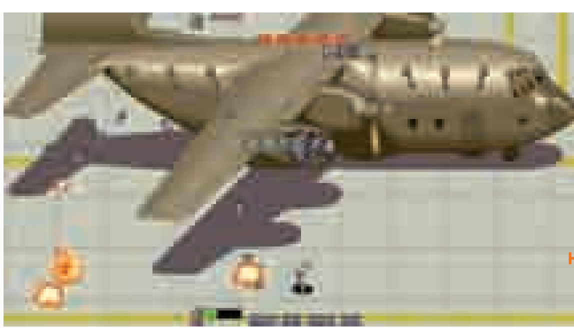
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80s A - Z
Back to the 80s
Full of Eastern promise
And much, much more

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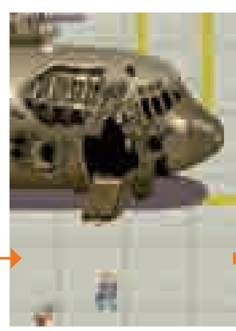


MERCS

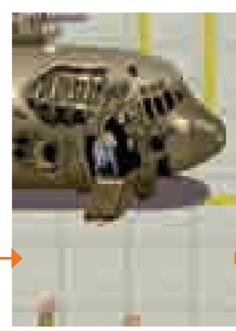
What was it with Presidents getting captured in videogames during the Eighties? Practically every cab you played on had a missing person that had to be retrieved and nine times out of ten it was the President of the good old US of A. This month's *Mercs* was no different…



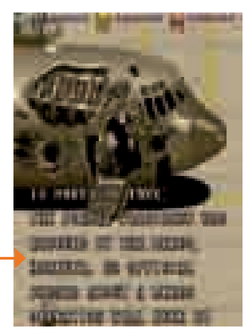
SCREEN 1
Now this is what you call a gunship (ho ho). Your soldier has faced off against some serious foes in his attempt to rescue America's number one priority, but with the President so close to hand (he's actually trapped inside the armed plane) you go all out with one last valiant effort. Armed with some serious firepower that includes some intense, vitality-draining missiles this last boss puts up a serious fight and is an absolute nightmare. Will you be able to succeed and rescue the president? Well, will you?



SCREEN 2
Of course you will – you're a pumped up Arnie clone that looks like he takes steroids for breakfast. Just look at the mess you've made of that plane; whoever gets the charge for that isn't going to be happy…



SCREEN 3
After a few tense moments one of the mercs disappears into the wreckage and returns with the President. As the remaining mercs dutifully salute they're no doubt wondering what suicidal mission they'll be sent on next.



SCREEN 4
After all the trouble you went to, you're told that there will be no official record of your heroic shenanigans. Honestly, why do you even bother? You risk life and limb and don't even get so much as a thank you. Bah!